SELF-ESTEEM AND SENSE PLEASURE:
THE ROOT MOTIVATIONS OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

SELF-ESTEEM AND SENSE PLEASURE:
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A Ph.D. dissertation by
Robert Nelson Campbell

Many theorists have attempted to discover the ultimate explanatory motivations underlying human behavior. No theory has yet won universal acceptance. It is the thesis of this work that all human behavior can be explained by the desires for self-esteem and for sense pleasure. The latter includes the pleasures of eating, drinking, sex, and comfort. Equivalent terms for self-esteem are self-regard, self-respect, pride, self-acceptance, self-love, amour propre, ego strength, good self-image, good self-concept, sense of personal worth, etc. Comprehended in these two desires is the desire to avoid the opposite: the desire for sense pleasure includes the desire to avoid physical discomfort and pain; the desire for self-esteem includes the desire to avoid all that would lower one's self-esteem.

Although sense pleasure motivations are more obvious, self-esteem motivations are more frequent and powerful, overwhelmingly the dominant force.

Somewhat similar theories have been proposed by others. Several theorists have maintained that all human behavior springs from a desire for self-esteem, in its various manifestations. We believe, however, that the present work is

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the only one to make a systematic development of the theory that all human behavior flows from one or a combination of the above two motives.

We are not proposing an ethical theory, an exposition of the way human beings should or should not behave; rather we present a discovery of the basic motives behind actual behavior.

The operation of the self-esteem motive is frequently subconscious. The individual may, with conviction, deny to himself and to others that he is operating from what are in fact his actual motives.

Reality principle: Our drive for an exalted self-concept is checked and modified by our experience of reality. We discover from experience that if we attempt to maintain a self-concept out of proportion to reality the result can be a painful loss of self-esteem when reality forces recognition of one's true situation. Thus, we attempt to conform our self-image to reality sufficiently to guard against painful future losses.

Theory of altruism: That self-love lies at the root of all of our behavior is the message of prominent theorists. This does not mean that all behavior is selfish. Self-love can motivate us to be sincerely solicitous of the welfare of others, even at sacrifice to self. This altruistic behavior can arise from identification with the other, and also from the individual's desire for self-actualization.

Common human goals: The common goals sought by human

beings, as expressed in Maslow's hierarchy of needs--physiological, safety, belonging, esteem, and self-actualization--are reducible to sense pleasure and self-esteem.

Theory of anger and aggression: Aggression is motivated either by anger, a desire for gain, or a desire for security. Anger is a surge of determination to restore one's wounded self-esteem. The desires for gain and for security are both reducible to sense pleasure or self-esteem considerations.

Theory of suicide: The most common type of suicide (despair) is caused by a desire to escape from a condition of painfully low self-esteem, coupled with no hope for future recovery of self-esteem.

Theory of humor: Humorous laughter at jokes or situations is an expression of pleasure arising from a sudden increase in the laugher's self-esteem.

Harmony with Freud's theory: We find evidence in Freud's writings to support our contention that the self-esteem drive is even stronger than the sex drive.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A major part of the scientific enterprise is the discovery of explanations for observable phenomena. Copernicus and Galileo offered explanations for the behavior of the heavenly bodies, Newton offered explanations for the behavior of moving bodies, terrestrial and celestial, Harvey offered an explanation for the behavior of blood in the human body, Boyle offered an explanation for the behavior of gases under changes in temperature and pressure, Darwin offered an explanation for the origin of the human species. These successful theories have had the same objective: to reduce a bewildering complexity of phenomena to a few basic principles. This, in essence, is the scientific enterprise. This is what the present study will attempt to do with human behavior.

This attempt is, of course, only one in a long line of attempts to explain human behavior. The topic, being of much more importance than is the behavior of heavenly bodies or terrestrial bodies or of blood in the human body or even than is the genesis of the species, has attracted numerous theorists to solve its intricacies. Most of these theorists have realized that, intricate and complex and infinitely rich though human behavior is, the basic principles underlying it may be

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simple and few. Among the more successful of these theorists, Freud proposed two basic sets of instincts as explanatory of human behavior; Abraham Maslow offered a hierarchy of five human needs, and Alfred Adler proposed that human behavior is reduceable to one all-encompassing drive.

The qualities of a good theory are, a) explanatory power, b) predictive power, c) ability to generate other theories, d) ability to stimulate research, and e) simplicity. Usefulness in solving practical problems depends upon explanatory and predictive power.

We believe that the theory proposed in these pages is able to offer a reasonable explanation for any example of human behavior. In the ensueing pages we will offer some support of this contention by using the theory to explain a wide spectrum of human behavior. In these matters one does not expect to show that a particular theory is the only possible explanation for an example of human behavior; actually that would be out of the question for any theory of human motivation to attempt. Competing theories each offer an explanation for a category of behavior, and the reader must judge for himself which theory he thinks has the more comprehensive and plausible explanatory power.

No theories of human motivation have been notably successful in predicting human behavior much beyond the success attained by ordinary common sense, based on a few decades of experience. However, most theories, including common sense, do have some predictive power. We can predict that another will

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get "uptight" when we disagree with his political opinions, we can predict that well-chosen praise will encourage another's efforts, we can predict that a man will not be pleased if we beat him at tennis, etc. However, even the most successful theories of human behavior fall far short of the satisfying 100% accuracy of physical laws (obviously, my physics is the Newtonian variety current in the 1940's) in predicting the behavior of falling bodies or expanding gases or reappearance of comets. The inaccesability of human behavior to such pin-point prediction does not necessarily argue to a greater complexity of principles governing that behavior, but can be explained by the fact that there are vastly more imponderables entering into the human equation. Each human being has a unique set of experiences, memories and values that would have to be known and evaluated--an impossible task--to hope for 100% accuracy in predicting how that human being will behave in a given situation.

At this point we are not claiming any greater predictive value for the theory proposed in these pages than for other theories. Offering evidence to support such a claim would be quite outside the scope of the present study.

If two theories are fairly equally possessed of the other desireable qualities of a good theory, then the simpler one is to be preferred. It is said that the Ptolemaic system of astronomy was able to offer mathematical formulae which could as successfully predict the motions of the heavenly bodies as could the newly challenging Copernican system, but a telling bit of evidence in favor of the latter--even apart from Galileo's discoveries--was the much greater simplicity of its formulae

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and computations. Our present theory of human motivation does have a lovely simplicity, although admittedly not as simple as that of Alfred Adler. We offer two basic principles as explanatory of human behavior; he offered one, the striving for superiority. Whether his theory is equally comprehensive we will consider later.

Regarding the ability of the present theory to generate other theories, we will offer in these pages several derived theories: theories purporting to explain aggression, anger, altruism, suicide, and laughter. Because of the radical (as in "root") nature of the present theory, it can serve as the basis for theories regarding any particular aspect of human behavior--education, management, criminology, neurosis, etc.

As to the ability of the present theory to stimulate discussion and research, only time will tell.

Most of the statements in this book are in positive, unqualified form. This does not mean that the author is closed to the possibility of error in his reasoning and theory. How often have we been convinced that we had a particular situation correctly analyzed and had arrived at a definitive answer, only to discover that we had overlooked some element that completely changed the picture. We are prepared to face the eventuality that the reader will discover some flaw in our concepts or reasoning which will call into question the validity of our conclusions.

However, perhaps presumptuously, we do have a good degree of confidence in the validity of our analyses and conclu-

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sions. Such confidence that we feel that a likely reader reaction will be in harmony with Schopenhauer's observation that it is the fate of truth to appear at first paradoxical, then trivial. The reader may at first disagree with the self-esteem theory of human motivation, then gradually, as he absorbs the fullness of the meaning of self-esteem and its ubiquity in our behavior, he may conclude "But of course all our actions are motivated by self-esteem and/or sense pleasure; it is sheer tautology! You have written a fat book to belabor the obvious!"

A note as to terminology: the use of "mankind" and other masculine gender words as generic terms is not intended in any chauvinistic sense. Erich Fromm's justification for the use of such terms seems apt here:

> Another semantic problem is offered by the use of "man" as a word to denote mankind, or humankind. The usage of the word "man" for both man and woman is not surprising in a language that has developed in patriarchal society, but I believe it would be somewhat pedantic to avoid the word in order to make the point that the author does not use it in the spirit of patriarchalism. In effect, the contents of the book should make that clear beyond any doubt.[1]

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[1]Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1973), p. 20.

CHAPTER II

THE SELF-ESTEEM THEORY OF HUMAN MOTIVATION

It is the thesis of this work that all human behavior can be explained by man's desire to be aware of good possessed by self. We will explain at some length what is meant by this statement. Following sections of this study will consider the motivation theories of several thinkers to discover to what extent their views harmonize with the present thesis. Finally, we will see how successful our theory is in explaining some salient categories of human behavior--unselfishness (altruism), and at the opposite end of the kindness spectrum, aggression; at one end of the spectrum of human joyfulness we will offer a theory of humor, and at the opposite end of that spectrum we will develop a theory of suicide.

Man's desire to be aware that he possesses good is the motivation which is the key to a proper understanding of human behavior. By the term "good" we mean "that which is desired." Certainly this is not to be equated with moral good. The good which is the object of desire may indeed in some cases be also morally good, but in some cases it may be morally neutral or even bad--murder, rape, etc. However, our present work is not a discussion of morals. We intend no moral judgments about the motives we propose as explaining human behavior. Our thesis is not concerned with human behavior as it "should be," not with any ideal situation, but with human

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behavior as it actually is.

By the term "desire" we do not intend to take sides in the discussion about whether the mainsprings of human action are "pushes" (drives that impel man) or "pulls" (goals that lure him on). Whether man's desire to be aware of his possession of good be considered a drive, an instinct, an aim, or a motivation is immaterial to our thesis.

The desire may be conscious or it may be deeply buried in the individual's unconscious. He may vehemently deny, to others and even to himself, that he desires this good which is actually motivating his conduct.

It seems that human beings can become aware of their possession of a desired thing in two ways. First, in a way that we have in common with lower animals, that is, the testimony of our senses. We become aware of our satisfying possession of food by seeing it, smelling it, tasting it, munching it, just as the dog does. Our sense inform us when a cheery fire is restoring our desired body warmth on a chilly day. The family cat experiences the same gratification. Our sense of touch tells us when we are obtaining a gratifying relief by scratching an itch, similar to a bear rubbing himself against a tree trunk. This type of awareness of possession of the good desired we will refer to as <u>sense pleasure</u>. It embraces the <u>immediate</u> pleasures we obtain from the use of our sight, hearing, touch, smell, taste, feeling of comfort. We stress immediate because our senses also bring us information that may give us a secondary (reflective, psychological) pleasure.

This latter is the second way in which we can become

aware of good possessed by self. This is a way which, by common consent though not universal consent, is considered to be unique to the human species on this planet. This type of awareness we will refer to as "psychological." It depends upon man's ability intellectually to conceive of goods, desire them, and conceive of himself as the possessor of them. Human beings like to think of themselves as being superior thinkers, lovers, businessmen, scientists, parents, etc. A dog may love to hunt, but we have no evidence that he loves to think of himself as a superior hunter. However, the existence or non-existence of such a capacity in animals is not vital to our thesis. The incontrovertible fact is that human beings can be "intellectually," "psychologically," or "reflectively" aware of being the possessor of a desired good. For this we have many terms in the English language, with varying nuances. The term "self-esteem"signifies a psychological awareness of desired good. A high self-esteem is awareness of possession of much good; low self-esteem is awareness of possession of less good than is desired. Some terms closely equivalent to self-esteem, but with nuances that we will consider later, are self-respect, self-regard, self-worth, pride, self-acceptance, self-image, self-concept, amour propre, ego-strength, self-love, etc.

In using the term "self-esteem" for this "psychological awareness of good possessed" we do not intend the pejorative connotation which is sometimes attached to self-esteem, that is, a too-high estimation of oneself. In this study when we say that man desires self-esteem we mean that

he desires a high opionion of himself, and we abstract from whether that opinion is justified or is too high.

Now let us examine more closely the terms "awareness," "good," "possessed," and "self" in our thesis. The psychological awareness of good possessed by self may be explicitly conscious, as when an individual prides himself on being highly successful in his profession, or it may be inchoate and implicit, in the case of a person who experiences a warm glow on being treated with consideration, without explicitly adverting to the source of his increased sense of well-being. The awareness of good possessed may be factual or illusory. One may consider himself the best bowler in his league and have the scores to prove it, or he may consider himself the wittiest person in his group even when others consider him a crashing bore.

The good possessed may be actual or potential. The youth of "great potential" derives considerable self-esteem not only from his present capabilities, but also from envisioning the great things he hopes to accomplish in the future. Hope is of such vital importance in our estimation of our lot; sometimes one is tempted to think that our vision of our future possibilities means more to us than do the present realities of our situation. The convinced Christian patiently bears with poverty and adversity, looking forward to the glory of eternal life; the ardent communist bears the privations of his present life, believing that this is setting the stage for the workers' paradise; the gambler stuffs more cardboard into his shoe, munches his peanut butter sandwich in his bleak

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room and consoles himself with the thought of the "big hit" or "hot hand" which is just around the corner. Each of us has a cherished hope that carries us through lean times.

Finally, the term "self" can be qualified. It may refer to our immediate self, or to the broader self which includes all those persons, groups, movements, ideologies, etc., with which we identify. Thus, when son becomes a doctor, mother radiates pride. When our football team wins the Superbowl, we stand just a little taller. When our candidate wins the presidential election we feel a glow of personal achievement.

Our original thesis can now be re-stated: all human behavior can be explained by man's desire (conscious or unconscious) for awareness (factual or illusory) of good (anything desireable) possessed (actually or potentially) by self (immediate or extended). A briefer re-statement: all human behavior can be explained by man's desire for sense pleasure and/or self-esteem.[1] Included in this statement is the negative aspect of the same motivations: man seeks to avoid dis-

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[1]There are some religious groups that believe that God gives to some persons the ability to act according to a motivation not dealt with in this study, that is, a love for God above all. According to this religious belief, the individual possessing this motivation (not innate, but acquired) has, in addition to the human desires we all share, the dominant desire that God be glorified, loved, praised, and obeyed, by as many human beings as possible, including self, forever.

In this study we will not attempt to deal with the existence or non-existence of this motivation. The human behavior that is characteristically ascribed to this motivation can also be explained by the desire for self-esteem, operating through identification with this belief system. Therefore, knowledge of the existence of this motivation is ultimately a matter of faith and is outside the scope of the present study.

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pleasure to his sense, and to avoid any awareness that diminishes or threatens his self-esteem.

Desire is Directed Toward the Awareness of Possession

In our thesis we have stressed man's desire for an awareness of possession of good, rather than merely the desire to possess good. This is because, effectively, our desires seem more directed toward the awareness of possession than actual possession. For instance, possession of the desired good does not satisfy our desire until in some way we become aware that we possess it. That stock in a gold mine that you bought in a weak moment several years ago, and wrote off as a piece of idiocy, has now skyrocketed in value due to a newly discovered rich vein and rising gold prices, making you a comfortable profit. But this brings you no pleasure, no satisfaction of desire, because you are not yet aware of the mine's recent success. On the other hand, we can derive much satisfaction of desire from even an illusory awareness of good possessed. For instance, I find considerable comfort in my conception of myself as a good public speaker, until hearing a tape recording of one of my talks rudely awakens me to reality. Observers of the human scene frequently comment on man's ingenious methods of concealing reality from himself in order that he may continue to take pleasure in his illusory awareness of good possessed. Freud's ego defense mechanisms are examples of our rationalization to protect ourselves from the realization of our deficiencies. We may be slothful in adding to our

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stock of excellence, and negligent in avoiding loss of excellence, but we are constantly on the qui vive to add to our awareness of our excellence, and ever vigilant and zealous to prevent any loss of that awareness, that is, to prevent humiliation. We will develop this theme further in a later section of self-deception.

Terms Signifying "Awareness of Good Possessed by Self"

The term "self-esteem" as it is commonly used can be equated with an awareness, valid or illusory, of good possessed by self. We esteem someone to the extent that we consider him possessed of good. A high self-esteem is the awareness that self is possessed of much good. Of course that awareness may be judged by others to be false, and then we have the pejorative connotation of an "inordinately high opinion of self" that is sometimes attached to the term self-esteem.

Self-respect is also a close approximation for awareness of good possessed by self. One slight difference is that self-respect ordinarily carries a positive connotation, that is, the implication that the person's awareness of the good he possesses is a valid awareness, rather than an illusory one. The same can be said for self-regard.

The term "pride," also an awareness of good possessed by self, sometimes carries the positive connotation that self-respect does (we are poor but we have our pride), and sometimes carries a negative implication similar to that occasionally attributed to self-esteem ("pride goes before

a fall"). The term "honor," strictly speaking, refers to esteem rendered to an individual by others, but it is often loosely used as an equivalent for self-esteem.

William James proposes the terms self-esteem, pride, self-complacency, self-feeling, vanity, conceit, vainglory and arrogance as equivalencies.[1] However, vanity, vainglory, arrogance, and conceit are much too negative in connotation for us to accept as synonyms for the rather neutral "awareness of good possessed by self."

Self-image, self-concept, and self-evaluation are almost interchangeable with our "awareness of good possessed by self," except that in most sentences the adjective "good" would have to be prefixed to self-image, etc., to obtain accurate interchangeability. Self-evaluation has the further difficulty that it may either refer to the process or to the result of the process.

The term self-love can mean either self-complacency, which is awareness of good possessed by self, or it can mean self-seeking, which is a desire for good to be possessed by self. Also, in some cases, self-love carries a morally negative connotation. The French amour propre, often used in English as well, can carry the same connotations as self-love, but is usually used as a synonym for self-esteem.

Ego-strength, sense of self-worth, sense of human dig-

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[1]William James, The Principles of Psychology (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1910), p. 308.

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nity and self-acceptance are terms which also are commonly used to indicate awareness of good possessed by self.

The same can be said for the "I'm OK feeling," a term used to express the goal of Transactional Analysis.

Summing up, to express the concept "awareness of good possessed by self" we have, mutatis mutandi, a variety of terms: self-esteem, self-regard, self-respect, pride, self-image, self-concept, self-evaluation, honor, self-feeling, self-complacency, self-love, amour propre, ego-strength, sense of self-worth, self-acceptance, sense of human dignity, and the "I'm OK feeling."

The synonym for awareness of good possessed by self that we will use most frequently in this study is self-esteem. Once again, in using that term we abstract from any negative connotation, as it sometimes carries when used as a synonym for conceit. Interchangeably with self-esteem we will often use the term self-respect.

Relation Between Sense Pleasure and Self-Esteem

Two Types of Pleasure

What is pleasure? Is it not merely satisfied desire? Is it not true that every time we experience pleasure it is due to the satisfaction of some desire? To test this, let us consider some examples of pleasure that seem most remote from satisfaction of desire. You see a total stranger do a kindly deed for another total stranger, and feel a warm glow of pleasure. What desire of yours is being satisfied here? There are several possibilities. First, we find a pleasure in see-

ing or hearing something that agrees with our own moral code, or standard of values, because this offers additional confirmation that we are right, that our judgment in this important matter is good. Secondly, just as we often feel uneasy in the presence of a harsh interchange between two strangers, an uneasiness due at least in part to the awareness that a harsh world bodes ill for our own welfare, so also when we see kindness between two strangers it gives us the comfortable feeling that this is not such a bad world after all, which augers well for our own welfare. And thirdly, even though the others are total strangers, we can identify with them as fellow human beings, with the result that the good experienced by them is good experienced by ourselves, in these extended selves. Naturally, such considerations are seldom explicitly in our consciousness, nor need they be in order to effectively give us a warm feeling of pleasure.

Or suppose you feel pleasure at seeing the first yellow crocus of spring. What desire of yours is being satsified in this case? The sight of the brave little flower is a promise of better weather to come. Also, this refreshing glimpse satisfies to a small degree our ever-present desire for beautiful sights.

Accepting for the moment the idea that all pleasure comes from satisfied desire, is it also true that all satisfied desire yields pleasure? We have all desired something, obtained it, and been disappointed rather than pleased. Is this a case of satisfied desire not bringing pleasure?

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Instead, was it not a case of our desire not being satisfied by the thing we thought would do so. For instance, we order a filet mignon, wait with anticipation, and receive something that is tough, stringy and overdone. Disappointment rather than pleasure. But also, no satisfied desire. Our desire was not just to receive a steak, but to sink our teeth into a tender, juicy steak.

Sometimes desire is satisfied but is followed by regret. The prospect of gain or pleasure may lure us into an action that is contrary to our moral code. However, in this case we actually do experience some pleasure when the desire is satisfied, but remorse follows when we begin to realize what we have done to our self-respect. This then is a case of satisfied desire with pleasure, followed by frustration of a more basic desire, with attendant displeasure.

But is it more accurate to say that pleasure is satisfied desire, or that it is a state of mind, or state of being, resulting from satisfied desire? As always, we should opt for the simpler version, unless it proves to be inadequate. In this case we see no need to bring "state of mind" or "state of being" into the equation, so we will settle for the position that pleasure is satisfied desire. This we are prepared to modify if subsequent considerations indicate that it is inadequate.

Pleasure being satisfied desire, we can expect types of pleasure to correspond to types of desire. Here we suggest that human beings have two basic types of desire: those which

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we have in common with other animals, and those which are uniquely human. In common with animals we have desires for gratification of the senses. The type of pleasure corresponding to these "animal" desires is sense pleasure.

And, as we noted earlier, desires unique to human beings are those which involve some psychological awareness for their gratification. They involve an appreciation of ourselves as possessors of some good. We want money not only for the creature comforts is makes possible, but also for the accompanying sense of security, for a sense of keeping up with the Joneses, for the feeling of personal worth it can give us, for the accompanying vision of expanded horizons. The desires unique to human beings we suggest can all be embraced under the rubric of "psychological awareness of good possessed by self." And here self includes those extended selves, the other human beings with whom we may identify. This principle of identification we will develop more fully in a later chapter.

The two basic desires then in the human economy are for a sensory awareness of good possessed, and for a psychological awareness of good possessed. The two basic corresponding pleasures are sense pleasure and self-esteem. Here we find ourselves in agreement with the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes:

> Now whatever seems good, is pleasant, and relates either to the sense, or the mind. But all the mind's pleasure is either glory, (or to have a good opinion of one's self), or refers to glory in the end; the rest are sensual, or conducing to sensuality, which may be all com-

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prehended under the word conveniences.[1]

Aquinas also holds that there are two types of pleasure, sensual and rational:

> Now pleasure is twofold, as we shall state later on: one is in the intelligible good, which is the good of reason; the other is in good which is perceptible to the senses.[2]

Sense Pleasure and Self-Esteem Are Separate Motivations

We have proposed two motives as explaining all human behavior. Some observers of the human scene maintain that only one motive is necessary to explain all behavior. Adler offers the drive for superiority as the single motivating force. In deference to Adler and to others who hold that the single motivation of self-esteem, or its equivalent, explains all human behavior, we should consider whether the desire for sense pleasure might actually be merely another manifestation of the desire for self-esteem. Certainly our desire for sense pleasure is so intimately tied up with self-esteem considerations that it is difficult to separate the two in particular cases. Do the physical pleasures of sex ever exist apart from some psychological pleasure in the real or imagined possession of a desireable partner? Do the pleasures of eating or drinking ever exist in what might be called a "pure" state, unalloyed with self-congratulation on one's competance at

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[1]Thomas Hobbes, Hobbes Selections, ed. F. J. E. Woodbridge, Leviathan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930), p. 260.

[2]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 30, a. 1, corp.

having thus provided for himself, or at least self-congratulation on one's good fortune?

It might seem that a case can be made for the independent existence of sense pleasure motivation from the behavior of an infant. The infant's world seems to be one of only sense gratifications--eating, drinking, being comfortable. But actually it is difficult to say when the self-esteem motivations appear. Does even the infant need the self-esteem gratification of awareness of being loved? Some justification for this view is offered by the repeated observations that infants tend to wither away if they do not receive enough fondling and affection. Therefore we hesitate to say that even in the infant does sense pleasure exist apart from the self-esteem drive.

The case of the dieting person may seem to offer proof that we have a sense pleasure drive which can be independent of self-esteem motivation. The dieter sometimes lets his desire for sense gratification impel him into gobbling goodies, all the while hating himself for this affront to his self-esteem. But research into the matter of compulsive eating has revealed that it can be a complex combination of motives, most of them having self-esteem roots. Therefore we cannot rely on this argument in favor of sense pleasure motivation as an entity in its own right.

However, consider the times when you have turned on the hot water to wash, put your hands in the stream, and jerked them away from scalding hot water. Is this not strictly a

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sense pleasure reaction--in its negative aspect, the desire to avoid pain? It does not seem necessary or plausible to bring self-esteem into the picture here. This type of example can be multiplied in our daily life--scratching an itch, shifting to a more comfortable position, turning up the thermostat, answering a painfully urgent call to go to the bathroom even in a social situation where going to the bathroom may be somewhat embarrassing, etc.

For these reasons we conclude that sense pleasure is a motivation having an independent existence of its own, that is, it cannot be reduced to merely another expression of the drive for self-esteem. However, ordinarily the two motivations have a constant and mutual interaction as we shall consider more fully in this section. And, as we have already pointed out, both of these motivations are aspects of the desire for awareness of good possessed. They differ in the way in which we achieve that awareness--whether directly by testimony of the sense, or by a concept of self as possessor of a good (this latter, of course, can be based upon testimony of the senses). Therefore the system of motivation proposed in this book can be considered monistic in the sense that all human behavior springs from the desire for awareness of good possessed (also, our desire for happiness can be considered as the single motivating factor), or it can be considered as dualistic, in that sense pleasure and self-esteem are the well-springs of our behavior.

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Which Desire Predominates?

Which of these two desires predominates in motivating our behavior? Sense pleasure motivations are more readily apparent, leading sometimes to the conclusion that they must be dominant. Sex is obviously a sense pleasure activity, less obviously a self-esteem source. Sense pleasure in eating, drinking, and being comfortable forces itself upon our attention, whereas self-esteem motivations are often difficult to ferret out. We have a curious penchant for hiding our self-esteem motivations from ourselves, and bristle defensively when someone points them out. It is as though a self-esteem motivation revealed is a self-esteem motivation defeated.

Actually, the predominance of self-esteem motivation over sense pleasure motivation, both in frequency and power, is, upon reflection, so evident that one is slightly embarrassed to belabor the obvious by offering evidence. Is getting up in the morning primarily motivated by sense pleasure or self-esteem considerations? Is going to school or to work primarily motivated by sense pleasure or self-esteem considerations? Are one's conversations with others primarily motivated by sense pleasure or self-esteem considerations? We must opt overwhelmingly for self-esteem in all these cases. We cannot discount the independent influence of sense pleasure, but it is easy to see why Alfred Adler and others could come to the conclusion that our desire for a feeling of superiority, an exalted self-concept, was the total explanation for our behavior.

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Personality Types: Epicurean and Stoic

One important aspect of the relation between the desires for sense pleasure and self-esteem is worthy of comment. The individual can adopt a life-style which makes the two desires allies, or he can adopt a life-style that makes them enemies. He can derive self-esteem gratification from the satisfaction of sense desires, or he can derive self-esteem from curbing his sense pleasures. The "great lover" builds his self-image largely upon his sexual prowess, the gourmet preens himself upon his discriminating taste, and the average person to a lesser degree finds ground for self-congratulation in his sensual activities. "Grab all the gusto you can get!" But there is another type--variously called Spartan, Stoic, Puritan, ascetic, etc.--who builds his self-image largely upon his self-discipline, self-denial, and control of his sense desires. The "allies," sensual, type of relationship between sense pleasure and self-esteem comes to us more easily and naturally, and in most cultures is the predominant adjustment. Of course, as in all typologies, "pure types" are rare.

For centuries, Epicurean and Stoic philosophies competed for men's loyalties, and indeed continue to do so today, although today as implicit Weltanschauungen rather than as formal philosophies. For the Epicureans, all pleasures were good, good both in the sense of desireable and morally praiseworthy. This does not mean that Epicurus and his disciples passed their days in orgies of debauchery. Actually,

they favored a simple, retiring life as most conducive in the long run to fullest pleasure of mind and body and avoidance of cares and pains. Epicurus himself was a man of moderate, temperate life, teaching his disciples that over-indulgence resulted in pain out of proportion to the pleasure obtained.[1] This pleasure/pain calculus led the apostle of pleasure to the paradoxical observation "Sex never benefitted any man, and it's a marvel if it hasn't injured him!"[2] His experience with sex had led him to the same conclusion that Epicurean Oscar Wilde voiced 2000 years later: "The pleasure is momentary, the posture ridiculous, and the price damnable!" However, despite this apparently ascetic attitude toward sex, Epicurus' basic doctrine was that all pleasures are, in themselves, good, and are the criteria for personal excellence. The better man is he who is achieving in his life the greater balance of pleasure over pain. Thus the true Epicurean, prudently enjoying sense delights, was at the same time increasing his self-esteem.

Also seeking a solution to the problem of human unhappiness/happiness, the Stoic followed a different path. He considered that placing his happiness in pleasure, especially physical pleasure, made him too vulnerable to external con-

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[1]Some of Epicurus' later followers (Julius Caesar, "every woman's husband," "lock up your daughters, Caesar is in town") did not take such a long range view in their pleasure seeking, and have given Epicurus' philosophy its popular reputation for sensual abandonment.

[2]George K. Strodach, The Philosophy of Epicurus (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1963), p. 206.

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sitions. "Sickness, poverty, the malice of other men and a multitude of other causes can deprive me of pleasure. I want to be master of my own destiny, to find happiness--and perhaps more important, to escape unhappiness--in a way that is not subject to the vagaries of fortune." The answer seemed to lie in self-control, in disciplining oneself to accept with equanimity of spirit whatever trials or blessings fate might send. The most obvious obstacle to achieving this constant tranquillity was the appeal of physical pleasure, whose siren song constantly lures the individual back to a vulnerable dependency on external circumstances. As a result, the Stoic came to regard physical pleasure as a fifth columnist within his own psychological camp.

> It seems that the true Stoic found something repulsive in any admission, however guarded, of the value of pleasure--of any qualification, however cautious, of the stern, inescapable demands of duty.[1]

Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius, "one of the finest and greatest men who ever lived,"[2] (a judgment supported by the fact that during his nineteen years of almost absolute power over the civilized world, Marcus maintained his sterling character, an outstanding exception to the principle enunciated by Lord Acton, "power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely") writes in his notes to himself:

Show those qualities then that are absolutely within

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[1]Rex Warner, The Greek Philosophers (New York: The New American Library of World Literature, Inc., Mentor Books, 1958), p. 171.

[2]Whitney J. Oates, The Stoic and Epicurean Philosophers (New York: Random House, 1940), p. xxiii.

> thy power, sincerity, gravity, endurance of labour, aversion to pleasure, contentment with they portion and with few things, benevolence, frankness, no love of superiority, freedom from trifling magnanimity.[1] (emphasis ours).

The dichotomy of attitudes toward sense pleasure--"sense pleasure is good and I pride myself on getting lots of it," versus "sense pleasure is demeaning and I pride myself on my self-denial"--serves as the basis for contrasting personality types who customarily view each other with dislike. Stoic Cicero in the Roman Senate denounced Epicurean Marc Anthony as a lecher, a drunkard and a waster of public funds. Anthony had Cicero beheaded and preserved his head and hand to gloat over. In our own day the personal animosity between steak-and-lobster John F. Kennedy and cottage-cheese-and-ketchup Richard M. Nixon did not issue in a beheading--although some of the more wild-eyed theory-concocters have hinted at the equivalent.

In summary, sense pleasure and self-esteem are separate entities; neither is merely a function of the other. Both are expressions of our desire to be aware of possession of good. Which is to say, both are expressions of our desire for happiness. In many cases of human behavior, both sense pleasure and self-esteem considerations are present, mutually interacting. A fundamental basis for a typology of personality is the habitual relationship between sense pleasure and self-esteem in the individual's life style. The Epicurean or "average Joe" type gets a self-esteem boost from enjoying

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[1] Marcus Aurelius, Meditations (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), p. 47.

sense pleasures--"grab all the gusto you can get"--while the Stoic, Puritan, ascetic type gets a self-esteem boost from curbing sense pleasures.

Relation Between Self-Esteem and Happiness

What is happiness? Is it not merely satisfied desire, nothing more or less? Consider your moments of happiness--have they not been times of satisfied desire? Of course we are not limiting the term "desire" to something sensual or sexual. Your moments of exaltation at the sight of a beautiful sunset--was it not compounded of satisfaction of your desire for a peaceful state of mind, for a sense of unity with nature, for a vision of beauty? Such desires may be delicate and fleeting, certainly not as clamorous and insistent as some of our other desires, but desires they still are. Your moments of happiness surrounded by your loved ones, feeling their affection and rejoicing in seeing their happiness--is this too not a matter of satisfied desire? Even the mystic in transports of ecstatic prayer, is, by his own accounts, experiencing satisfaction of desire for union with the Beloved.

This is of course not to say that in your moments of happiness all of your desires are satisfied. You have experienced some peak periods of happiness when onlookers might say that you seemed to have little to be happy about, since to all appearances your presumed desires were not well satisfied. For instance, in times of economic adversity you may may have had some very happy times. Or in times of apparent failure you may have been able to tap some inner re-

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sources that gave you a deep sense of well-being and peace. In these cases a very basic desire for a sense of possession of inner excellence was satisfied, even though some more superficial desires were notably unsatisfied.

Granted that each moment of happiness is a moment of satisfied desire, nevertheless in order to equate happiness with satisfied desire we must also establish that the converse is true--that each moment of satisfied desire is a moment of happiness. And here it seems that there are difficulties. Just as in our consideration of pleasure and satisfied desire, so also it seems true that satisfied desire does not always bring happiness, but sometimes disappointment or remorse. If the reader will pardon a personal note, let me describe my boyhood experience of shooting a wild duck. My companions and I were 200 yards away from a small flock of bluebills contentedly sunning themselves on a placid marsh lake. They were too far away to be disturbed by the sound of our .22 rifles. (Illegal rifle for duck hunting, and out of season.) My first shot was short and a foot or so to the right of a white-backed male bluebill. A little spout of water leaped up where the shot hit, but didn't seem to bother the ducks. Adjusting sights, the second shot was on line but still short. The third shot produced a flurry of disoriented flapping that subsided into a drifting inert blob, as the other ducks leaped into the sky. We raced around the lake to retrieve the dead duck. My desire to shoot a duck was satisfied, but as I looked at the glazing eyes and the open beak dribbling

blood, instead of happiness I felt a sadness and remorse--what had been a trim, beautiful creature, capable of bringing joy to the beholder, now was a crumpled mass of feathers, never to move again. Why did this satisfaction of desire not bring happiness? Actually, it did bring a brief and superficial happiness--the moment of exultation in success. But later the action brought unhappiness because it lessened satisfaction of desire; my desire to see myself as an excellent person was frustrated by this confrontation with the fact that I was a destroyer of life and beauty. To the degree that I identify with the natural world I am diminished by every tragedy in that world.

Sometimes however it seems that satisfaction of desire brings not even a moment of happiness but only disappointment. I desire to bite into a beautiful red apple and do so, only to find with disgust that it is dry and mealy inside. Here I suggest that the desire was for the experience of biting into a crisp, juciy apple, and this desire was never satisfied, hence not even a moment of happiness.

Subject to correction by the more enlightened reader, we suggest that happiness is to be equated with satisfied desire--the happiness varying in depth and intensity and duration according to the nature of the desire and degree of its satisfaction.

Some support for this viewpoint is offered by the statement by Augustine, "happy is he who has whatever he

desires, and desires nothing amiss."[1] His qualification "and desires nothing amiss" is relevant to the fact that he is speaking of full and lasting happiness, whereas we are speaking of happiness in general, including that which is fleeting and even that which is quickly followed by regret.

Further support is found in Aquinas: "He who has whatever he desires, is happy, because he has what he desires . . ."[2] And, speaking of perfect happiness, "since happiness is the perfect and sufficient good, it must needs set man's desire at rest and exclude every evil."[3]

We have previously developed the equation between pleasure and satisfied desire, and between awareness of good possessed by self and satisfied desire. Therefore all these seem to be terms for one and the same thing: happiness, pleasure, satisfied desire, and awareness of good possessed by self. True, many great philosophers, among them Aristotle, the Stoics, Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas, have pointed out that happiness is not to be equated with pleasure, but on rereading their exposition we find that they are referring to physical pleasure, or in some cases to pleasure in the broader connotation of what are commonly considered to be "pleasureable activities." Of course these philosophers are aware of the fuller intellectual and psychological significance of

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[1]Augustine, De Trinitate, xiii. 5.

[2]Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 3, a. 4, ad 5.

[3]Ibid., Q. 5, a. 4, corp.

pleasure, but I do not find them dealing with the question of whether pleasure in this fullest scope can be equated with happiness.

It is the thesis of this book that a fifth term can also be equated with happiness, pleasure, satisfied desire, and awareness of good possessed by self. That fifth term is "sense pleasure and/or self-esteem." Here, by the conjunction "and/or" we intend the meaning that human beings can seek their happiness in a combination of the pleasures of sense and self-esteem, or they can concentrate on self-esteem alone, increasing self-esteem by eschewing the pleasures of sense. It seems psychologically impossible to follow the course of foregoing self-esteem considerations in order to concentrate on sense pleasure. Apparent attempts in this direction are actually on-going alliances between self-esteem and sense pleasure, as in the case of the Epicurean personality, or are a temporary "I'll hate myself in the morning" alliance between sense pleasure and a short-range self-esteem consideration, in conflict with one's habitual self-esteem trends.

Summing the relation of sense pleasure and self-esteem to the other four terms: they are the two ways in which we can become aware of good possessed by self; they sum up the totality of our desires to be satisfied; they are the two basic types of pleasure which embrace all pleasures; and they embrace the various ways in which human beings seek happiness. Happiness then is sense pleasure and/or self-esteem, or for the vast majority of us, simply sense pleasure and self-es-

teem.[1] Self-esteem is essentially a psychological awareness of good possessed by self; happiness is psychological awareness of good possessed by self, plus sensory awareness of good possessed by self.

In view of the above, we would expect researchers to have found a close correlation between the individual's level of self-esteem and his self-reports on his degree of happiness. We would not expect a one-to-one correlation here however, inasmuch as sense pleasure considerations also contribute to the happiness level. We find verifications of this close correlation between happiness (also called "life satisfaction") and self-esteem in Robinson's Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes:

> More direct measures of self-esteem were included in Bachman et al's (1967) national study of 2,500 tenth-grade boys . . . the correlation between the three-item life satisfaction scale and a ten-item self-esteem scale was .53 for the entire sample. . . It can be seen that again items measuring happiness and satisfaction correlate almost as well with self-esteem items as the self-esteem items do with each other.
>
> Further evidence for the close interconnection of self-esteem and satisfaction is provided at many points in Wilson's (1967) review. Wilson notes, for example, studies which have demonstrated drops in self-esteem accompanying periods of unhappiness and depression and studies which report correlations in the .40's between unhappiness and discrepancies between real self and ideal self and

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[1] The traditional Christian believer may object that happiness is actually union with God. May we point out that Christian tradition is in harmony with the idea that union with God in heaven will entail fullest satisfaction of self-esteem and of the then-existing sense desires. According to Christian tradition those in heaven will have no sexual desires.

between need for achievement and actual achievement.[1]

However, this correlation between happiness and self-esteem is complicated by various factors. As already mentioned, happiness will also depend partially upon the degree to which the individual's sense pleasure desires are being satisfied, which in turn will have an effect on self-esteem. Also, in measuring self-esteem should we take the individual's absolute level of self-esteem, or should we use the relation of this to the level desired by the individual? Julius Caesar is a case in point: a man of tremendous self-esteem, by all accounts,[2] and yet he could be miserably unhappy when he compared his achievements with those of Alexander the Great at a comparable age. Are we to measure his self-esteem by his feelings of superiority over his associates, or by his feelings of inferiority with regard to Alexander? Or can we simply say that his happiness correlated well with whichever aspect of his self-esteem was uppermost in his mind at the time? This latter position seems to check well with experience.

Another factor that complicates the self-esteem/happi-

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[1] John P. Robinson and Philip R. Shaver, Measures of Social Psychological Attitudes (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Survey Research Center, 1973), p. 27.

[2] When Caesar was captured by pirates and held for ransom, he would call his captors together every day to listen to him read his poetry. Throughout, he assured them that when he was ransomed he would return and hang them all. Presumably they guffawed, "Quite a guy, this Julius! And a great sense of humor." After he was ransomed he assembled a military force, captured the pirates and hanged them.

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ness correlation is the presence of hope for the future. Joe may measure much the same as John on a self-esteem scale, but have a greater degree of happiness because he sees more prospects for future improvement. However, further analysis, which we shall not attempt at this point, might show that hope for the future raises not only happiness but also self-esteem to the same degree. Despite these complications, our theoretical prediction of a close correlation between happiness and self-esteem is gratifyingly corroborated by Robinson's "it can be seen that items measuring happiness correlate almost as well with self-esteem items as the self-esteem items do with each other."

We have maintained that the desire for self-esteem and sense pleasure is the root motivation of all of our behavior, and we have traced an equation between happiness and self-esteem plus sense pleasure. Therefore it follows that the desire for happiness is the root motivation of all of our behavior. At this point our reasoning is corroborated by the opinion of many thinkers, both ancient and modern. Among them, Aquinas maintains that all of man's desires are directed, of necessity, toward his "last end" (the thing that he desires most basically), and that this "last end" for all men is necessarily happiness.[1] Aquinas also cites Augustine as holding the same view, that all of

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[1]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 1, a. 6 and a. 7.

of our thoughts and actions are motivated by a desire for happiness.[1] It is my impression, subject to correction by the more knowledgeable reader, that this same view is widely held in America today, almost as a common sense truism.

Is Our Theory of Human Nature Hedonistic?

Inasmuch as we have stated that self-esteem is a form of pleasure, and that together with sense pleasure it motivates all of our behavior, it follows that we are proposing that pleasure is the root motivation of all of our behavior. Thus it seems that we can be charged with "sheer hedonism," which in some intellectual circles is the ultimate put-down. In response, let us first distinguish between ethical hedonism and philosophical hedonism. Ethical hedonism maintains that the goodness of an action is determined by the degree to which it contributes to "the greatest pleasure for the greatest number of people." It is thus a pleasure/pain calculus of ethics. Our theory is not concerned with ethics, with how people should or should not behave, but rather with how they actually do behave. Therefore our theory cannot qualify as an ethical hedonism. Philosophical hedonism is the view that the desire for pleasure is the basic motivation of all behavior, without going into questions of ethics. But in this context the usual connotation put upon the word "pleasure" is sense pleasure, or at least "fun activities." Thus the hedonist is pictured as being a sensualist, at worst a follower of the Playboy phil-

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[1]Ibid., a. 7, sed contra.

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osophy and at best an Epicurean devoted to "gracious living." Self-esteem pleasures are much broader in scope than this, and thus our theory of human behavior cannot be limited to hedonism in this usual sense. If however hedonism were taken to embrace even such austere pleasures as that taken in duty well done, as that taken in self-sacrifice for a cause, as that taken in a life devoted to the welfare of others, as that taken in asceticism and virtuous deeds and meditation and scientific research, etc., then our theory of human motivation would qualify as a hedonistic theory. However I have never seen the word hedonism used in such sweeping terms.

Similar Previous Theories

Is the theory proposed in these pages "something new" or is it merely a slightly different formulation of previous theories? Certainly there is nothing original in the concept that our desire for sense pleasure motivates much of our behavior. Few things are more self-evident, as the success of air-conditioning, steak houses and massage parlors testifies. The ideas of some thinkers even lend color to the conclusion that all of our behavior is motivated by desire for sense pleasure. Epicurus' doctrine that we do everything in a search for pleasure and to avoid pain, coupled with his idea that pleasure is ultimately physical sensation, leads to the above conclusion. A crude popular interpretation of Freud's ideas has led to the same conclusion.

Nor is there anything new in our emphasis on self-esteem in human motivation. The pervasiveness of this moti-

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vation, under a variety of names, was a favorite theme of French writers of the 17th and 18th centuries, among the better known being La Rochefoucauld, Montaigne, and Rousseau. Theological writers have always denounced the ubiquity of pride in human behavior. Adler has built his psychological system on the thesis that all human behavior springs from man's striving for superiority. Adler, oddly enough for a disciple of Freud, seems to totally disregard the independent influence of sense pleasure in human motivation.

As Marx and Hillix interpret the writings of Carl Rogers, he seems to be proposing the enhancement of self-esteem as the human being's single goal. "Rogers, like Goldstein, believes that the organism has a single goal. It strives to actualize, enhance, and maintain itself."[1] And what does Rogers mean by "itself"? "To Rogers, self is a structure compounded out of the experiences which the individual is able to attribute to his own body or to the results of his own behavior; the self, then, is a self-picture, or self-awareness."[2]

Nathaniel Branden, in his Psychology of Self-Esteem, extols self-esteem as a man's most priceless possession and "the single most significant key to his behavior."[3]

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[1]Melvin H. Marx and William A. Hillix, Systems and Theories in Psychology (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1963), p. 340.

[2]Ibid., p. 339.

[3]Nathaniel Branden, The Psychology of Self-Esteem (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Co., 1969), p. 110.

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Robert Schuller, in Self-Love, states the case emphatically:

> I strongly suggest that self-love is the ultimate will of man--that what you really want more than anything else in the world is the awareness that you are a worthy person. It is the deepest of all the currents which drive man onward, forward and upward. All other drives --pleasure, power, love, meaning, creativity--are symptoms, expressions or attempts to fulfill that primal need for personal dignity. . . Even the will to love is a clever mask hiding the deeper and undetected will to self-love. As infants we learn that we love and are usually loved in return, which leaves us with a wonderful feeling of well-being. We fail to perceive that this sense of well-being is really an experience of self-love. So we go through life driven by the compulsion to love--unaware that what we really seek is not love as an end in itself, but as food to nourish our self-love. Again we discover, early in life, that a wonderful feeling of well-being sweeps over us when we love other person. We fail to analyze our feelings precisely enough if we stop short of labeling that sense of well-being what it really is--self-love. . . Even the will to meaning, under critical analysis, will often prove to be an expression of the will to self-love . . . Meaning is empty unless it feeds and nourishes your self-esteem.[1]

In this powerful and comprehensive statement Schuller equates self-love with a desire for an "awareness that you are a worthy person," with a "need for personal dignity," with a "sense of well-being," and with the desire to "nourish your self-esteem," and sees it as the well-spring of all of our behavior.

Equally emphatic and vigorous in his statement that self-esteem is our ruling motivation is Mark Twain. He states his philosophy of life in the person of the Old Man in the essay What is Man?:

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[1]Robert H. Schuller, Self-Love: The Dynamic Force of Success (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1969), pp. 21-25.

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> Young Man. Well, let us adjourn. Where have we arrived?
>
> Old Man. At this. That we (mankind) have ticketed ourselves with a number of qualities to which we have given misleading names. Love, Hate, Charity, Compassion, Avarice, Benevolence, and so on. I mean we attach misleading meanings to the names. They are all forms of self-contentment, self-gratification, but the names so disguise them that they distract our attention from the fact. Also we have smuggled a word into the dictionary which ought not to be there at all--Self-Sacrifice. It describes a thing which does not exist. But worst of all, we ignore and never mention the Sole Impulse which dictates and compels a man's every act: the imperious necessity of securing his own approval, in every emergency and at all costs. To it we owe all that we are. It is our breath, our heart, our blood. It is our only spur, our whip, our goad, our only impelling power; we have no other. Without it we should be mere inert images, corpses; no one would do anything, there would be no progress, the world would stand still. We ought to stand reverently uncovered when the name of that stupendous power is uttered.
>
> Young Man. I am not convinced.
>
> Old Man. You will be when you think.[1]

The name of that "stupendous power" is of course the desire for self-esteem, or in Mark Twain's words, "the imperious necessity of securing one's own approval."

At this point we want to consider more in detail the motivational theories of Adler and two other sets of authors, inasmuch as these are very similar to our own self-esteem theory and have been developed in considerable detail by the authors.

The Drive for Superiority

In Adler's system there is one basic motive, the drive for superiority. Other apparent basic motives such as

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[1]Samuel Clemens, The Complete Essays of Mark Twain, ed. Charles Neider, What is Man? (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1963), p. 352.

self-preservation or pleasure are in fact but expressions of the drive for superiority:

> I began to see clearly in every psychological phenomenon the striving for superiority. It runs parallel to physical growth and is an intrinsic necessity of life itself. It lies at the root of all solutions of life's problems and is manifested in the way in which we meet these problems. All our functions follow its direction; They strive for conquest, security, increase, either in the right or in the wrong direction. The impetus from minus to plus never ends. The urge from below to above never ceases. Whatever premises all our philosophers and psychologists dream of--all these are but vague representations, attempts to express the great upward drive.
>
> The history of the human race points in the same direction. Willing, thinking, talking, seeking after rest and pleasure, learning, understanding, working and loving, all betoken the essence of this eternal melody. . . .
>
> As for the striving for perfection, for superiority, or for power, some have always known about it, but not thoroughly enough to spread this knowledge to a larger mass or to illuminate the fundamental significance of this striving for the structure of the entire personality. Only Individual Psychology has pointed out that this striving for perfection is found in every individual and fills every individual . . . .[1]

This all-encompassing drive Adler variously refers to as the drive for superiority, for perfection, for completion, and, when he wishes to use it to explain undesireable behavior, as the drive for self-enhancement or self-esteem.

He points out that many others have commented on this drive in man, referring to it in a variety of terms. But his contribution is to have seen that this striving is innate, is the very stuff of man's existence, is found in every individual without exception.

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[1]Alfred Adler, The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler, ed. Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1956; reprint ed., New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 103.

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> Only Individual Psychology has pointed out that this striving for perfection is found in every individual [the prepotent dynamic principle] . . . I should like to emphasize first of all that striving for perfection is innate . . . a something without which life would be unthinkable.[1]

This drive for perfection, for superiority, is supreme over man's "admittedly effective" desires for pleasure and self-preservation. And in making this point Adler seems to equate the striving for superiority with the desire for self-esteem. Even without this explicit equation, it is evident that striving for superiority is a desire for awareness of possession of excellence exceeding that of others, at least in a certain respect, and thus is one manifestation of the desire for self-esteem.

> In what manner do these two admittedly effective incentives [pleasure and self-preservation] subordinate themselves to the main guiding line which drives toward enhancement of the self-esteem [even where they seem to dominate]?[2]

Adler goes on to answer that cases where pleasure or self-preservation seem to be dominant are actually cases in which the individual is seeking his self-esteem through pleasure or self-preservation, and therefore it is actually self-esteem which is the root motivation. In the following paragraph he once again spells out the dominance of the striving for perfection, and its equivalency with self-esteem.

> Human beings are in a permanent mood of inferiority feeling, which constantly spurs them on to attain greater security. The pleasure or displeasure which accompany this striving are only aids and rewards received on this

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[1]Ibid., p. 104. Brackets are found in text.

[2]Ibid., p. 122.

> path. . . . Thereby the coercion toward enhancement of the self-esteem has been excellently comprehended. This also becomes clear from one of Goethe's letters to Lavater where he remarks: "This passionate desire to drive the pyramid of my existence, the base of which is given to me, as high as possible outweighs everything else and barely admits momentary forgetting.[1]

What distinguishes the neurotic from the normal individual is the degree to which the former seeks superiority in ways that are socially useless or even harmful, while the latter to a large extent channelizes his drive for superiority in ways that are socially useful. This latter tendency Adler refers to as "social interest." Social interest is not a new drive, not a second drive, but is the ultimately desireable avenue for seeking superiority. Thus social interest is not a drive independent of the striving for superiority, but is a manifestation of the latter. Social interest seems to be an identification with others and concern for their welfare--or at least it is an enlightened self-interest which leads the individual to ways of behavior that contribute to the welfare of others.

> Adler's term for the social factor, Gemeinschaftsgefühl, presented no mean difficulty to the translators. The following terms have been used as English equivalents: social feeling, communal intuition, community interest, social sense, and social interest. The last seems most adequate generally, and it is also the one which Adler came to prefer.[2]

The unwary reader can glean from Adler's writings the idea that social interest is an innate drive in man independent of his drive for superiority. This would mean two basic drives in man rather than one. Some quotes that lend them-

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[1]Ibid., p. 123. [2]Ibid., p. 134.

selves to such a misinterpretation are:

> . Social interest is innate, just as the striving for overcoming is innate, with the important difference, however, that social interest must be developed, and that it can be developed only when the child is already in the midst of life . . .[1]
>
> Today everyone speaks of community and social interest. We are not the very first, but we are the first to have strongly emphasized the basic nature of social interest.[2]

And a quote from the editors of Adler's book contributes to this impression that social interest is a second basic drive, working in tandem with the striving for superiority:

> While Adler recognizes the necessity for developing social interest, the greater import for his theory lies in the assertion that this development applies to an innate disposition for other-directedness. Social concern becomes in this way a primary rather than a secondary phenomenon.[3]

However, a closer reading reveals Adler's true view--and his editors' true view--that altruistic urges and behavior are <u>not</u> innate to man, except as a potentiality, in the sense that man can learn to seek the fulfillment of his drive for superiority, for perfection, by identification with others and concern for their welfare. That is, by social interest.

> Social interest is not inborn as a full-fledged entity, but it is an innate potentiality which has to be consciously developed. We are unable to trust any so-called social instinct, for its expression depends upon the child's conception or vision of the environment.[4]

And he presents social interest as the better way of striving for perfection and security:

> An adaptation to immediate reality would be nothing other than an exploitation of the accomplishments of

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 140.

[3]Ibid., p. 139.

[4]Ibid., p. 134.

> the striving of others, as the picture of the world of the pampered child demands. The continuous striving for security urges toward the overcoming of the present reality in favor of a better one. This goal of perfection must bear within it the goal of an ideal community, because all that we value in life, all that endures and continues to endure, is eternally the product of social interest. . . .[1]
>
> Man has always taken this path, for, with his bodily and psychological disposition, he must strive continuously towards self-preservation and ascendency. In this manner he has found God whose function it is to point the way. God, as man's goal, is the harmonic complementation for the groping and erring movements on the path of life. The striving to gain strength from the divine goal always flows from man's insecurity and constant inferiority feeling. The fact that the form of the ideal varies is not essential. Whether the highest effective goal is called God or Socialism or, as we call it, the pure idea of social interest, it always reflects the same ruling, completion-promising, grace-giving goal of overcoming.[2]

Comments by the editors confirm this concept of social interest being the derivative, and best expression, of the drive for superiority:

> . . . the normal individual, due to his greater social interest, is more concerned with gaining satisfaction by overcoming difficulties which are appreciated as such by others as well. He has a goal of superiority which includes the welfare of others. . . .[3]
>
> In Adler's mature theory, social interest is not a second dynamic force counterbalancing a striving for superiority. Like other psychological processes or traits, it is a part of the individual's equipment, although the most important part. It is used by him in his striving for superiority or perfection, which in itself is socially neutral. In one of his last papers, Adler speaks of "the brick which we call 'inherited possibility of social interest,'" meaning by brick the raw material by which the striving for superiority is implemented, or the style of life is constructed, by the individual.

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[1]Ibid., p. 107.

[2]Ibid., p. 461.

[3]Ibid., p. 102.

> The fact that social interest at times appears to have dynamic properties, or is linked to the earlier need for affection, does not alter Adler's intention to describe the individual's total dynamic situation as unitary and self-consistent, modified only in its direction by the degree of social interest as this becomes an integral part of the striving. Just as intelligence affects the mode of the striving but does not conflict with it, so social interest becomes an integral part of the striving. A positive social adjustment is thus a primary form of behavior where a developed capacity of social interest is utilized, and is not the outcome of the conquest of selfish forces by social forces.[1]

Thus we see that in Adler's system the concept of concern for the welfare of others is the noblest manifestation of the one all-encompassing drive, basically self-oriented, and referred to by Adler under several names: the drive for power (early Adler), for superiority, for overcoming, for security, for self-enhancement, for self-esteem, for perfection, for completion, etc.

Enhancing the Phenomenal Self

In their book Individual Behavior, Donald Snygg and Arthur Combs, professors of psychology and clinical psychology respectively, develop the thesis that the humandesire to preserve and enhance self-concept is the motivating force behind all behavior. Their key concepts are "phenomenal self" and "self-concept." By "phenomenal self" they mean those qualities or things "perceived by a person to be part or characteristic of himself."[2] The authors make a distinc-

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[1]Ibid., p. 133.

[2]Donald Snygg and Arthur W. Combs, Individual Behavior (New York: Harper & Bros. Publishers, 1949), p. 111.

tion between phenomenal self and self-concept, reserving the latter term for those elements of the phenomenal self "which the individual has differentiated as definite and fairly stable characteristics of himself."[1] Thus their "phenomenal self corresponds to what in common usage would be called the self-concept, and their "self-concept" corresponds to the most salient and influential features of the self-concept.

The basic motivation in human behavior is the need to preserve and enhance the phenomenal self, which process the authors equate with "what the layman calls 'boosting self-esteem.'"[2]

> From birth to death the defense of the phenomenal self is the most pressing, most crucial, if not the only task of existence. Moreover, since human beings are conscious of the future, their needs extend into the future as well, and they strive to preserve not only the self as it exists but to build it up and to strengthen it against the future of which they are aware. We might combine these two aspects into a formal definition of the basic human need as: the preservation and enhancement of the phenomenal self. . . . When each act is seen as an attempt to preserve or to fortify the individual's concept of himself, behavior becomes meaningful . . . .
>
> When we see this child as he sees himself, his behavior becomes understandable. While we might analyze his behavior in terms of many specific needs all these become a function of the one dominant aspect--the need to protect and enhance his own self-concept.[3]

All human needs are a function of the need to protect and enhance self-concept--this, in essence, is the Snygg/Combs theory. It is the same as that developed in this present book, with the exception that the Snygg/Combs

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[1]Ibid., p. 112 [2]Ibid., p. 70.

[3]Ibid., p. 58.

theory, just as the Adler theory, seems to have implicitly subsumed sense pleasure motivations totally under the drive to preserve and enhance self-concept.

Legitimizing Our Role Identity

The theory of human behavior developed in the book Identities and Interactions is almost identical with the Snygg/Combs theory, but expressed in different terms. The authors' principal thesis is that we human beings are constantly, in both our thoughts and actions, attempting to maintain and enhance our "identity." Each of us has a multi-faceted concept of self, which is our "identity."[1] For this self-concept the authors also use the terms "role" and "role-identity." Each of us has a glamorized and over-blown concept of himself, which reality is constantly threatening to tarnish, with the result that our main concern and motivation is to "legitimize" our role-identity, that is, to preserve our glowing self-image from being dimmed by harsh reality.

> Because role-identities are idealized and rather idiosyncratic conceptions of oneself, the realities of life are constantly jarring them, raising difficulties and embarrassments for them. As a consequence of this jarring, we are always having to devise perspectives that allow us to maintain these views of ourselves, at some level, despite contradictory occurrences. As a creature of ideals, man's main concern is to maintain a tentative hold on these idealized conceptions of himself, to legitimate his role-identities.[2]

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[1]George J. McCall and J. L. Simmons, Identities and Interactions (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 94.

[2]Ibid., p. 71.

Among the most important ways we seek to legitimate our role-identity is through "role-support." This means testimony from others which helps to convince us that we do indeed have the role-identity that we cherish.

> This outcome leads to an consideration of what we call role-support, which is the expressed support accorded to an actor by his audience for his claims concerning his role-identity. This support is not simply for his claim to the right to occupy the social position in question or for the conventional rights and duties of the accompanying social role, although role-support includes these points as a minimum. Nor is role-support to be equated simply with prestige, status, esteem, or social approval of one's conduct in a given social position.
>
> It is instead a set of reactions and performances by others the expressive implications of which tend to confirm one's detailed and imaginative view of himself as an occupant of a position. Role-support is centrally the implied confirmation of the specific contents of one's idealized and idiosyncratic imaginations of self. These expressive implications of others may be expressions "given" or expressions "given off," that is, intended or unintended. The unwilling cries that escape the lips of a victim thus support the self-conceptions of the inquisitor as directly as do the flattering pleas of more pliable victims.[1]

Thus, as we will develop more fully in the next chapter, we seek testimony from others to bolster our self-esteem, that is, for "confirmation of the specific contents of one's idealized and idiosyncratic imaginations of self." This support from others for our self-concept is important, but even more important is the support we give to our own role-identity:

> Nonetheless, all things being equal, each of us is his own most important audience, for, unlike other audiences, this one cannot be escaped. In the end, it is ourselves that we have to live with, and the role-support that we accord ourselves is most important.[2]

We are engaged in a constant battle to maintain and

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[1] Ibid., p. 72.

[2] Ibid., p. 74.

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enhance self-esteem:

> Because of imperfect role-performances and the instability of role-support, then, identities are continually in need of legitimation. As proposed above, one of man's most distinctive motives is the compelling and perpetual desire to acquire support for his idealized conceptions of himself.[1]

In a variety of ways we legitimate our role-identity (maintain and enhance self-esteem). We are forced to this legitimation because role-support (support for our self-esteem coming from reality and from the testimony of others) seldom measures up to our role-identity. The various strategies we use to legitimate our role-identity are referred to by McCall/Simmons as "mechanisms of legitimation." Among these is "selective perception."

> In general, the person is able to pay most attention to a selected fraction of his own actions and the complementary actions of others, that fraction that is most favorable to his self-conceptions.[2]

Related to the selective perception mechanism of legitimation is the selective interpretation mechanism. Here the individual interprets audience reaction in the manner most favorable to his self-concept. A variety of other mechanisms are used by the individual to protect and enhance his self-concept, mechanisms we will only mention by name, inasmuch as these are usually self-explanatory: leaving the interaction; enactment of another role-identity; rationalization; scapegoating; disavowal of an aspect of role-identity; rejecting the audience; reducing investment in a threatened role-identity; and, as an ultimate "solution," suicide.

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[1]Ibid., p. 75.

[2]Ibid., p. 96.

The authors stress self-deception as a mechanism of legitimation and quote Erving Goffman in support:

> Whatever his position in society, the person insulates himself by blindness, half-truths, illusions, and rationalizations. He makes an "adjustment" by convincing himself, with the tactful support of his intimate circle, that he is what he wants to be and that he would not do to gain his ends what the others have done to gain theirs.[1]

In summary, the authors' theory of man's continual struggle to maintain and enhance his role-identity is very similar to the self-esteem theory developed in this present book, except that, like Adler and Snygg/Combs, they do not give any independent role to the sense pleasure motivation.

We have seen that others--and no doubt many more than we have mentioned here--have singled out either sense pleasure or self-esteem as the motivating force behind all human behavior. But can this present work at least claim priority for proposing a combination of the two, i.e., proposing that all human behavior can be explained by the desire for sense pleasure or self-esteem, working singly or in combination?

Even here we may have unwittingly followed in the footsteps of others. While the Pilgrim Fathers were shivering out their first few winters at Plymouth, in France a writer named Jean La Placette was publishing his Traité de l'Orgueil, in which he

> . . . subsumes all man's numerous desires under two classes: la volupté, which is not peculiar to man, and the

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[1]Erving Goffman, "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction," Psychiatry 18 (August 1955): 230.

> love of glory, praise, and the like, which is; and he somewhat hastily concludes that the motives of man's activities--or at least of his "sins"--are about equally divided between the two.[1]

Hobbes also, writing just about the same time as La Placette, suggests that all man's behavior can be explained by sense pleasure and self-esteem:

> Now, whatsoever seems good, is pleasant, and relates either to the sense, or the mind. But all the mind's pleasure is either glory, (or to have a good opinion of one's self), or refers to glory in the end; the rest are sensual, or conducing to sensuality, which may be all comprehended under the word conveniences.[2]

By the term "glory" Hobbes means self-esteem, as he indicates in the parentheses. Substantiating this we have his definition of "glorying":

> Joy, arising from imagination of a man's own power and ability, is that exultation of the mind which is called glorying: which if grounded upon the experience of his own former actions, is the same with confidence: but if grounded on the flattery of others; or only supposed by himself, for delight in the consequence of it, is called vain-glory. . . .[3]

Strictly speaking, Hobbes' passage reduces all pleasures to two, sense pleasure and self-esteem. But inasmuch as pleasure results from satisfied desire, he has equivalently reduced all man's desires to the same two.

In the light of the above, can the present work claim

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[1]Arthur Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 146.

[2]Thomas Hobbes, Hobbes Selections, ed. F. J. E. Woodbridge, Leviathan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1930) p. 260.

[3]Ibid., p. 197.

any sort of priority? It can, to this extent: we have not been able to find any other work which develops extensively and systematically the explicit thesis that all man's behavior can be explained by sense pleasure and self-esteem.

Various Levels of Self-Image

The most exalted of our self-images is the self we would "love" to be, the self that emerges in our fantasies and day-dreams. This self differs according to the person and his moods--today it may be a James Bond type, irresistable to beautiful women, invincible in destroying the forces of evil; tomorrow it is Albert Schweitzer, nobly sacrificing himself to bring happiness to the unfortunate; at various times it is leading pro on the golf tour, or discoverer of a cure for cancer, financial tycoon, best-selling author; all these images can find a place in our pantheon of self-deification. Normally we do not confuse this super-ideal self-image with reality, and consequently it has little effect on our behavior, other than to give a temporary boost to our self-esteem. Probably the average person attempts to curtail such fantasies, realizing that they are a waste of time and can blunt our psychic drive toward more realistic accomplishments.

Less exalted but more realistic is our ideal self-image. This is the self we would like to be and feel we should be, now or at some time in the future. By the word "should" we do not mean to limit this to a moral code, an obligation imposed by some external authority. Rather, by

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"should" we mean that the individual feels that this ideal self is quite within the range of his capabilities and talents and he owes it to himself to actualize this self.

This ideal self-image corresponds to Freud's "ego-ideal." In Freud's system, the super-ego is composed of conscience and ego-ideal. Actually he often uses the terms super-ego and ego-ideal interchangeably. The super-ego closely watches the ego, and when the ego deviates from the ego-ideal, the conscience condemns the "poor persecuted ego." The ego-ideal is the norm, the sort of person the individual feels he should be, according to the standards he has absorbed from his parents and society. The individual is motivated by the desire to measure up to his ego-ideal:

> One more important function remains to be mentioned which we attribute to this super-ego. It is also the vehicle of the ego-ideal by which the ego measures itself, which it emulates, and whose demand for ever greater perfection it strives to fulfil.[1]

When the ego fails to measure up to the ego-ideal, it causes the individual a loss of self-esteem, a feeling of inferiority:

> But the major part of the sense of inferiority derives from the ego's relation to its super-ego; like the sense of guilt it is an expression of the tension between them. Altogether, it is hard to separate the sense of inferiority and the sense of guilt.[2]

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[1]Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 64.

[2]Ibid., p. 65. A common understanding of Freud is that the super-ego is composed of standards, norms, thou-shalts and thou-shalt-nots, taken principally from the Judaeo-Christian moral code. The word "guilt" immediately

This ideal self-image also corresponds to what William James calls "pretensions," meaning ambitions and aspirations. We quote a passage from psychologist William James because it presents so neatly the effect that the ideal self-image can have upon our conduct and our self-esteem.

> I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all. Had I 'pretensions' to be a linguist, it would have been just the reverse. So we have the paradox of a man shamed to death because he is only the second pugilist or the second oarsman in the world. That he is able to beat the whole population of the globe minus one is nothing; he has 'pitted' himself to beat that one; and as long as he doesn't do that nothing else counts. He is to his own regard as is he were not, indeed he is not.
>
> Yonder puny fellow, however, whom every one can beat, suffers no chagrin about it, for he has long ago abandoned the attempt to 'carry that line,' as the merchants

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suggests some sexual transgressions, or feelings of hostility toward someone we feel we should love. Thus we picture the orthodox Freudian psychiatrist looking for the roots of feelings of guilt in early sexual experiences and hostility feelings. All this may have been quite valid in Freud's day and still has a measure of validity, but today one sees that feelings of guilt more frequently derive from failure to live up to standards and norms quite other than the Judaeo-Christian morality. The new commandments are "thou shalt be a financial success," "thou shalt be an adequate lover," "thou shalt have a good personality," "thou shalt grab all the gusto thou canst get," etc. It is these new commandments, thundered at us from the Mt. Sinai of Madison Avenue, whose infractions generate today's feelings of guilt, inferiority and neurosis.

In saying this, we do not mean to overlook the millions of people whose super-egos do contain "precipitates," to use Freud's term, from the Judaeo-Christian moral code. But in today's society the desires to have sex appeal and money are more powerful than are the desires to be chaste and humble and gentle, and the frustration of the more powerful desires is more likely to cause psychological problems.

> say, of self at all. With no attempt there can be no failure; with no failure no humiliation. So our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do. It is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator our success: thus,
>
> $$\text{Self-esteem} = \frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$$
>
> Such a fraction may be increased as well by diminishing the denominator as by increasing the numerator.[1]

Thus we see James presenting the ideal self-image as the goal which motivates our conduct, and as the standard by which we measure our self-esteem.

Actual Self-Image

More humbled by reality is our actual self-image. This is the way that we picture ourselves to be in the privacy of our own judgment. This actual self-image includes not only our present status, but also our judgment as to our future possibilities. A person who has accomplished very little in life may have a high actual self-image based on his estimate of what he is going to accomplish in the future. This estimate of potentiality should not be confused with the ideal self-image. A person may have a high ideal self-image but a low estimate of his chances of ever realizing that ideal. The ideal self-image is what the individual thinks he should be, and the potentiality part of his actual self-image is what he thinks he probably will be.

Although this actual self-image is closer to reality

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[1]William James, The Principles of Psychology (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1910), p. 310.

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than is the ideal self-image, still it is customarily inflated by our eagerness to think highly of ourselves, combined with our ingenuity in self-deception.

Freud uses the term "ego" at times in a way that corresponds to this actual self-image. Whenever our actual self-image measures up to our ideal self-image we feel a surge of self-esteem. Freud comments on this:

> There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal. And the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego ideal.[1]

We can say precisely the same thing, substituting actual self-image for ego, and ideal self-image for ego ideal.[2]

Importance of Actual and Ideal Self-Images

Our ideal self-image and actual self-image are of supreme importance in determining our behavior and our self-esteem. The ideal self-image exercises a ruling influence on our behavior in that we are constantly attempting to measure up to this image. It is, in all its various components, the norm, the goal toward which we are striving. The

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[1]Sigmund Freud, A General Selection From the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman, Group Psychology (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 200.

[2]In all this discussion of self-images, let us not forget that we have different self-images in different areas of life. I may have an exalted self-image as a money-maker, but realize that in esthetics I am a hopeless Philistine, etc. However, there does seem to be such a thing as a global self-image of our total excellence, each area of our life contributing whatever weight we have chosen to give it.

gap between the ideal self-image and our actual self-image is the measure of our self-esteem, by inverse proportion. As the gap closes, that is, as we approach to our ideal self-image, our self-esteem grows. Self-esteem is the awareness of good possessed by self, and we can only judge the degree of this by comparison with some standard. One standard is our ideal self-image, the way we think we should be, everything considered. And of course, the greater the gap, the lesser our self-esteem. However, this is not the total picture. Another element enters into consideration in determining our self-esteem. We can arrive at our estimate of the good possessed by self by comparison with another standard, that is, the amount of good we perceive as possessed by significant others in our life. In short, we arrive at our estimate of ourselves by comparison with what we feel we should be, and also by comparison with others. Despite the influence of the latter standard upon the former, they are not identical.

To illustrate the difference, consider an incident that Plutarch tells us about Julius Caesar. Caesar was in command of the Western armies of the Roman Empire, on campaign in Spain. On his thirty-third birthday, one of his officers found Caesar sitting on a sear Spanish hillside overlooking the camp, weeping bitterly. Caesar revealed the source of his sorrow to the officer: "When Alexander the Great was my age he had conquered the entire world. And here am I, not yet supreme in the Roman Empire." Caesar's self-esteem was wounded and depressed because he had failed

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to live up to his ideal self-image. But one can be certain that he still had a very high self-esteem based on his comparisons of himself with those around him, his subordinates and inferiors in so many personal qualities.

William James' formula, Self-esteem = $\frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$, is another phrasing of the truth that self-esteem depends upon the relation of actual self-image to ideal self-image. His formula can be equivalently phrased as Self-esteem = $\frac{\text{actual self-image}}{\text{ideal self-image}}$, inasmuch as he uses the term success to mean what the individual feels he now has, and pretensions to mean what the individual feels he should have. Stating self-esteem as the quotient, instead of the more customary way of stating it as the inverse of the difference between ideal and actual self-image, amounts to the same thing. In both cases self-esteem increases as actual self-image approaches ideal self-image. However, both James' formula and the more customary formula that can be stated as Self-esteem = $\frac{1}{\text{ideal self-image minus actual self-image}}$ fail to take into account the fact that we can have a good degree of self-esteem based upon our comparison with others, even though we have failed to live up to our ideal self-image. A Julius Caesar or the world's second best pugilist or oarsman in James' example may be temporarily devastated by failing to achieve his goal, but we venture to suggest that his self-esteem will find consolation in his superiority to the common run of men and will thrive as well as the self-esteem of the mediocre person who has more closely lived up to his mediocre

ideal self-image.

Subconscious Self-Image

The self-images we have discussed thus far have been more or less conscious, although not necessarily clearly explicit in all respects. But is it possible that underlying our conscious self-image there is a subconscious self-image that we do not admit even to ourselves because it is too unflattering. In moments of self-doubt we catch a glimpse of this darker side of the moon but quickly put the vision out of our mind as being a betrayal of self, a paralyzing negativism. Nevertheless, the repressed self-image continues to exist in our subconscious, exerting an influence on our behavior and threatening to surface when our resistance is low, as in dreams. Adler postulates a feeling of inferiority with which we all begin life; this dark self-image probably still lurks in the subconscious of each of us to a greater or lesser degree. Horney's concept of a basic anxiety with which we are all struggling lends support to the same idea. This we will term our subconscious self-image. And of course this is quite in harmony with Freud's ideas. The ego's repressed perceptions of the lusts and hates churning within the id could qualify as this subconscious (admittedly Freud does not use the term subconscious) self-image. The content of this subconscious self-image, however, must not be imagined as consisting of exclusively morally sinister traits. We may refuse to recognize our personal Mr. Hyde because he

is a rapist and a killer, but we may find him even more repugnant because he is socially clumsy, ineffective, petty and gross.

It can easily be seen what influence such an entity can exert on our lives. The gap between this subconscious self-image[1] and our actual (conscious) self-image is a measure of the security of our self-esteem. Signs of this gap might be a too-shrill assertion of our various excellences, a free-floating anxiety, an unwillingness to be alone and thus confront ourselves, an overeagerness to excel, among a host of other symptoms. This present the possibility that person A might have a higher, but less secure, self-esteem than person B. This seems to correspond to cases we have known.

Conclusion

Awareness of self, in its various aspects, is the central theme and activity of our psychic life. We have sketched out some of the levels of this awareness: the super-ideal self-image, the ideal self-image, the actual self-image, and the subconscious self-image. Our drive to

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[1]Would it be more accurate to refer to our subconscious self-image rather than to our conscious self-image as our actual self-image? The term "actual" in this context means what we really think of ourselves. But this subterranean self-image is not necessarily what we really think of ourselves; instead it could be merely a fear that this is what we are really like. It seems to me at present that our conscious self-image is a better claimant to being what we really think of ourselves, plagued though it be with repressed self-doubts. Of course, whatever our real self-image is, it can still be far from the objective truth about ourselves.

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enhance our self-esteem is a matter of enhancing our actual self-image. Enhancement of ideal self-image can work to exalt self-esteem ("What a noble person I am, to have such high aspirations") or it can work to lower self-esteem ("How miserably short I have fallen of realizing my high aspirations"). This latter effect the James formula points up.

Self-Preservation

"The first law of nature is self-preservation." Can such a commonly heard axiom be wrong? And yet our self-esteem theory proclaims that the first laws of human nature are the desires for sense pleasure and self-esteem. Such an assertion seems contrary to observable fact: people are ordinarily willing to undergo considerable pain in order to preserve their lives. How many times have we seen the Western movie character take a swig of whiskey, bite the bullet, and willingly submit to having his gangrenous leg hacked off with a bowie knife. This would seem to testify to a drive for self-preservation even more basic than the desire for sense pleasure.

At the opposite end of the bravery spectrum, we saw many Union soldiers in Red Badge of Courage fling down their rifles and flee from the charging Rebs. They were willing to risk a terrific loss of self-esteem in order to save their lives. Once again, self-preservation seems the more basic and powerful motive.

On the other hand, we find Adler's opinion that the self-preservation urge is merely an expression of our drive

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for superiority.

> I began to see clearly in every psychological phenomenon the striving for superiority . . . . Whatever premises all our philosophers and psychologists dream of --self-preservation, pleasure principle, equalization-- all these are but vague representations, attempts to express the great upward drive.[1]

Presumably, by the above statement Adler means that we only desire continued existence as the necessary substratum for continued and increased superiority. It is well to remember that by superiority Adler does not in all cases mean superiority to others, but sometimes means superiority to obstacles that impede growth. Put quite simply, Adler does not concede the existence of an instinct for self-preservation, as such, but instead he posits a drive for superiority, which ordinarily dictates self-preservation as a necessary means to its fulfillment.

Ironically, Freud can be interpreted as being in agreement with Adler on this point of the pre-eminence of the ego-interests over self-preservation of the organism's life.[2] In the following passage he presents the ego's concern about freedom from "painful feelings" as being more imperative--and hence more basic--than is either the sex drive or the self-preservative instinct. With regard to the origin of

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[1]Alfred Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 103.

[2]Of course Freud does explicitly concede the existence of a self-preservation instinct as such, but with this qualification, that the organism strives to preserve its life until it can die in the manner and at the time chosen by its unconscious death instinct.

hatred he says:

> The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings, without taking into account whether they mean to it frustration of sexual satisfaction or of gratification of the needs of self-preservation. Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of the hate-relation are derived not from sexual life, but from the struggle of the ego for self-preservation and self-maintenance.[1]

It is obvious that he is using the term "self-preservation" in two different senses. In the first case, "gratification of the needs of self-preservation," the ego is brushing such a consideration aside in its consuming hatred for an offending object; whereas in the second case, "struggle of the ego for self-preservation," it is this very consideration which is motivating the ego's hatred of the offending object. The passage makes sense if we interpret the first "self-preservation" as meaning the preservation of the organism's life, our customary meaning of self-preservation, and the "struggle of the ego for self-preservation" as referring to the ego's desire for its own welfare, which consists in measuring up to the ego-ideal. In this light the passage means that the ego's concern to measure up to the ego-ideal is even more powerful than is the sex instinct or the urge to preserve the life of the organism. The "painful feelings" are conscious or unconscious realizations that threaten to expose the failure of the ego to live up to the ego-ideal. The ego "pursues with intent to destroy" such

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[1]Freud, General Selection, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, p. 84.

"objects," and failing to destroy them objectively, summons up the ego-defense mechanisms to destroy them subjectively, that is, to suppress them from consciousness.

We find support for this interpretation that the "struggle of the ego for self-preservation" refers to the ego's desire to measure up to the ego-ideal, in Freud's explanation of the fear of death observed in melancholia:

> The fear of death in melancholia only admits of one explanation: that the ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego, instead of loved. To the ego, therefore, living means the same as being loved--being loved by the super-ego, . . .[1]

For the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego. This, in Freud's terminology, is another way of saying that for the ego, living means measuring up to the ego-ideal. Thus the struggle of the ego for self-preservation, that is, for living, is a struggle to measure up to the ego-ideal. And the struggle to measure up to the ego-ideal is precisely what Adler means by the striving for superiority, for perfection, although he does not use the Freudian terms. It is also what the present author means by the desire for self-esteem, i.e., the struggle to make actual self-image correspond to ideal self-image.

Supporting this interpretation of Freud is another reference:

> There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal. And the sense

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[1]Freud, General Selections, The Ego and the Id, p. 233.

> of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego ideal.[1]

Failure of the ego to live up to the ego-ideal leads to feelings of guilt and inferiority. Success in living up to the ego-ideal leads to feelings of triumph, and logically, superiority.

This leads to the following interpretation of the original passage we quoted from Freud: "The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings (the ego strives to eliminate all things or ideas which bring to consciousness its failure to live up to the ego-ideal) without taking into account whether they mean for it frustration of sexual satisfaction (regardless of sexual considerations) or of gratification of the needs of self-preservation" (and even though such a course may endanger the life of the organism). In other words, self-esteem considerations are more imperious and powerful than are sex or self-preservation considerations.[2]

This awareness in Freud that ego concerns take precedence over preservation of the life of the organism is

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[1]Freud, General Selection, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, p. 200.

[2]Admittedly the motivational supremacy of self-esteem over sex is never explicitly conceded by Freud, and even runs counter to his explicit statements. However, such a supremacy is implicitly contained in his writings, as we hope to show in a later chapter.

comparable to the motto "Death before dishonor," an expression that sounds quaint to modern ears but which still has considerable validity. Every year hundreds of thousands of people choose to directly end their lives by suicide rather than to continue living with a lacerated self-esteem. How many millions more seek relief from the pain of a depressed ego by means of indirect suicide--self-destructive life styles and psychosomatic illnesses--is impossible to estimate.

One becomes ready to question the existence of any instinct for self-preservation when he reads of suicide epidemics. Some instances:

> Herodatus, speaking of the Crestonaeans of Thrace, says that no sooner does a man die than "a sharp contest" follows among his wives as to which has the best right to share her husband's grave. Prescott, in his History of the Conquest of Peru, writing of events two thousand years later, goes out of his way to emphasize a similar eagerness among the Incas. When a great man died a number of his attendanst and favorite concubines were immolated with him, and, says Prescott, "the women have been known, in more than one instance, to lay violent hands on themselves when restrained from testifying their fidelity by this act of conjugal martyrdom."
>
> Caesar, when he tells how certain picked warriors, or soldurii, were unwilling to survive their chieftain, is merely instancing a form of institutional suicide found in the most divers countries. . . .[1]
>
> Somewhere into this sacrificial category must also be fitted the Jaina sect of Southern India, who threw themselves under the wheels of the Juggernaut, and the devotees of the Japanese divinity Amida, who, amidst applause, made hecatombs for their divinity, throwing themselves into the sea or burying themslves alive. Similarly, to this type of institutionalsuicide must belong those anciens habitans des Isles Canaries, of whom Jean Dumas speaks. At certain festivals, having celebrated the rites of the god in their temple on the summit of a mountain,

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[1]Henry R. Fedden, Suicide, A Social and Historical Study (New York: Benjamin Bloom, Inc., 1972), p. 20.

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> many of them tripped down the verdurous slopes with song and dance, and so, without hesitation, over the precipice edge which was to lead them to eternal happiness. Among the Northern peoples the fabled death of Odin resulted in approved and almost institutional suicides.[1]

More contemporary examples are given by Meerloo:

> During World War II, several examples of mass suicide were observed. When people fail as a group and believe they have no future, they surrender "en masse" to death. An example of this attitude is given in Robert Sherrel's report of the taking of Saipan as quoted by Lindsay. He describes a Japanese officer cutting off the heads of his kneeling men with a Samurai sword; crowds of civilians and soldiers walking off cliffs or wading into the ocean, while others blew themselves up with grenades. "Three women sat on the rocks and deliberately combed their long black hair. Finally they joined hands and walked slowly into the sea." A hundred soldiers on the rocks at Marpi Point bowed to the Marines from the cliff-tops, spread a large Japanese flag on the rocks, and then pulled the pins from grenades which the leader handed them.[2]

Of course the possibility remains that there is indeed an instinct for self-preservation, but that in the above instances that instinct was overcome by some more powerful desires, e.g., an eagerness for social approval, or to avoid pain and humiliation. We suggest a more "parsimonius" explanation (always preferable precisely because of its parsimony, other things being equal), the hypothesis that there is no instinct for self-preservation and that the manifestations which are usually attributed to that instinct can be explained by the universally recognized desires for sense pleasure and self-

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[1] Ibid., p. 24.

[2] Joost A. M. Meerloo, Suicide and Mass Suicide (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1968), p. 83.

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esteem, especially in their negative forms, the desires to avoid physical pain and loss of self-esteem.

Let us apply this theory to the case of the man who willingly submits to having his gangrenous leg amputated with a bowie knife. We do not need to posit any special instinct for self-preservation to explain his behavior. He probably realizes that painful though the operation is, it would be even more painful to allow the gangrene to follow its course. Therefore the mere motivation to avoid physical pain insofar as possible would dictate he submit to the operation. However, self-esteem considerations would be even more impelling. True, he suffers a self-esteem loss as a result of the loss of his leg, but he is faced with a choice between that and the much greater loss of all the sense pleasure and self-esteem gratifications that his continued life may offer. A self-esteem balance dictates that he submit to the operation.

Similar explanations serve in the case of the soldier who flees from the charging enemy. He is willing to risk the loss of self-respect and reputation that cowardice will bring him, in order to avoid the likelihood of total loss of self-esteem and sense pleasure that death would bring. In his automatic and instantaneous assessment of the situation, self-esteem and sense pleasure considerations dictate flight. Why then does the soldier next to him stand and fight to the death? Self-esteem considerations are at the root of his behavior also. Different individuals have

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different value systems. Which is to say, they seek self-esteem in different ways. The faithful soldier may have a strong "death before dishonor" code; he feels he could not live with himself if he showed up as a "yellow-bellied coward." Or he may have such a strong identification with the cause he is fighting for that he will be "proud to die for that cause." Or he may have that feeling of invincibility testified to by so many ("death is for the other guy, not for me"), so that he assesses the result of his standing and fighting as victory and a hero's medal for himself. Any number of other explanations might be offered to indicate how a self-esteem balance would motivate him to stand and fight.

Possibly such an analysis suggests a deterministic philosophy, as though individual choice had no part to play, or at least were determined by temperament and circumstances. Such a conclusion however is not intended and does not seem necessitated by our discussion. At this point an opinion on free will or determinism does not seem necessary for the further development of our theory.

In further support of the hypothesis that human beings do not have an instinct for self-preservation, as such, are the following considerations. Awareness of good possessed by self is, quite literally and without exception, the only thing that makes life worth living. Continued existence--continued awareness--without awareness of good possessed by self is, again quite literally, unalloyed torment. Man has no instinct to preserve an existence of unalloyed torment.

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But, it might be objected, we see cases of individuals who are living under conditions that approach pure torment who still cling to life--the person with an incureable, painful disease who gives every sign of fighting for his life. Actually in such a case there is still some awareness of good possessed by self. There is still hope for recovery, even though the person has been informed of his terminal condition and has assented thereto, still there persists an unvoiced hope that by some "miracle" or miracle he will recover. And hope is an awareness of good possessed--possibility of acquiring a good is itself a good. And such a person has still other awarenesses of good possessed by self. He may still enjoy some small sense pleasures--the relief provided by pain killers, some foods that he can still enjoy, an alcohol rub by the nurse, etc. And he has some self-esteem gratifications--cards sent by well-wishers, visits from friends and family, memories of past accomplishments, etc. It is these small continued awarenesses, physical and psychic, of good possessed by self that make his life still worth living. At such a point there is no "instinct for self-preservation," as such, that carries him on. Any reflexive clinging to life at that point may be explained by a still continuing desire to cling to whatever awarenesses of good possessed he still retains. Should his oxygen supply be cut off, he struggles to avoid the pain which oxygen hunger brings, and to attain the imperious pleasure--often unnoticed because it is the very milieu in which we exist--

of oxygen intake. The psychic component of this struggle for life is the fear of losing the psychic goods he still possesses, principally his identity, which in itself is a composite of awarenesses of various goods possessed--I am a man, an American, intelligent, with a record of achievements, a good sense of humor, etc. Also there may be an apprehension that death means entree into an existence with no awareness of good possessed--that is, an existence devoid of physical pleasures and without even his present self-esteem considerations, an existence devoid of love or respect or self-respect. In his fearful apprehensions that unknown beyond may be conceived of as totally without awareness, oblivion, or even worse, as awareness without awareness of good possessed. Naturally no one thinks in just such terms, but thinking in such possibilities is part of the human condition.

Awareness of good possessed by self is what makes life worth living, whether the awareness be that which we have in common with the cat and the dog, i.e., sense pleasure, or that which is unique to the human being, and to which we have given the short-hand name of self-esteem or self-respect. Life totally devoid of sense pleasure and self-esteem, and with no hope thereof, if such can be imagined, would be a horror which no person could be motivated to cling to.

Throughout we have emphasized a desire for an <u>awareness</u> of good possessed by self, rather than merely a desire

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for good possessed by self. This is because our desire is immediately directed toward and satisfied only by the awareness, as we have explained in a previous section. Possession of good has no meaning for us until we become aware of that possession in some way, at least in its effects.

Does man have an instinct for self-preservation? If by the term self-preservation we mean preservation and enhancement of awareness of good possessed by self, then our answer is yes, the human being does have this drive. Indeed, that drive, in its twofold aspect of sense pleasure and self-esteem, is the motivator for all our behavior. But if by self-preservation we intend the customary meaning, an urge for continued existence or awareness per se, then it seems that man has no urge in this direction. On the contrary, there could be imagined no greater horror for the human being than continued existence or awareness devoid of awareness of good possessed by self. Hell, by definition.

Among the psychologists who have come to the conclusion that the drive for self-preservation is not an entity in its own right, but is desired merely as a means to gratify other drives, are Anna Freud and the Snygg/Combs team, whose general theory we have already considered. Anna Freud explains Cyrano de Bergerac's determination to save Christian's life as being due to Cyrano's implicit realization that only through the union of Christian and Roxanne can he, Cyrano, realize the vicarious fulfillment of his own desires. She then states the general principle:

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> Analysis shows that both the anxiety and the absence of anxiety are due rather to the subject's feeling that his own life is worth living and preserving only in so far as there is opportunity in it for the gratification of his instincts.[1]

In reading the Snygg/Combs statement let us bear in mind that what they mean by "phenomenal self' is what is commonly referred to as "self concept."

> If this struggle to maintain the integration of the organism is seen in a purely objective sense, the only conclusion possible is that the fundamental motive of human behavior is the preservation of the physical organism. But, this is inadequate because many things men do are not directed toward their physical survival. They risk their lives in war and sports, they drive too fast, use alcohol, drugs, and even commit suicide. How can such activities be motivated by a need for self-preservation? Seen simply in terms of this need such behaviors do indeed seem paradoxical. When we observe them, however, as attempts by the individual to maintain the organization of his phenomenal self, they become completely consistent. What the individual is seeking to preserve is not his physical self but the self of which he is aware, <u>his phenomenal self</u>.[2]

In the same vein, Snygg and Combs state:

> The soldier in wartime is not torn between a desire for self-preservation and self-destruction as he faces the coming battle. On the contrary, he is concerned solely with the preservation or enhancement of his phenomenal self. Although the situation will vary from individual to individual, it might roughly be described as follows: He may risk death on the one hand to <u>preserve</u> his phenomenal self against becoming the kind of person who "lets his buddies down" and on the other hand to <u>enhance</u> his phenomenal self by being the kind of person who is "one of the gang," or as brave as the rest.[3]

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[1]Anna Freud, <u>The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence</u> (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1946), p. 145.

[2]Snygg and Combs, <u>Individual Behavior</u>, p. 56.

[3]Ibid., p. 61.

What appear then to be the results of either a self-preservation instinct at work, or, in contrary behavior, a death wish at work, are actually the results of the individual's desire to preserve and enhance his self-concept, his self-esteem.

Self-Esteem Not Proposed As Criterion of Personal Excellence

Inasmuch as we are proposing in this study that the strongest and most frequent motive underlying our behavior is our desire for self-esteem, we may be conveying the implicit message that the person with highest self-esteem is therefore the better person. In other words, since high self-esteem is the most desired goal it is therefore the most desireable goal from a "value judgment" standpoint. Reinforcing this is the current mystique that equates self-esteem with mental health, happiness and general personal efficacy. The person with higher self-esteem, self-respect, self-confidence, is ipso facto the better person. Certainly much can be said for this point of view, but in this study we wish to dissociate ourselves from such a value judgment. Actually such a view is simplistic. Level of self-esteem is hardly a reliable criterion of personal excellence. To realize this, we need only consider a few facts. First, self-esteem may be based upon false standards of excellence. Gaylord Ravenal has a high self-esteem based upon his skill at fleecing poor dupes at the gaming tables; Heinrich Schmidt had a high self-esteem based upon his devotion to

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the Fuhrer and his efficiency as a ruthless destroyer of the enemies of the third Reich; the brilliant young American business executive has a high self-esteem based largely upon his career success; John Jones has a solid self-esteem deriving largely from the love and concern his parents showered upon him as a child. None of these is a reliable guage of personal excellence.

Second, since self-esteem is higher to the extent that the individual's actual self-image approximates to his ideal self-image, the self-esteem can be raised by scaling down his ideal self-image, that is, by lowering his standards. The thus-augmented self-esteem can scarcely be equated with an augmented excellence.

Also, self-deceit often plays a part in maintaining self-esteem. Two persons may have the same level of successes and failings in the area of compassion and concern for others, but person A maintains a higher self-esteem by rationalizing away his failings, whereas the self-esteem of person B suffers because he honestly faces up to his failings.

Can we still say that high self-esteem is a desirable trait? Desirable in the sense that everyone wants it, yes.[1] Desirable in the sense of being a reliable measure of personal excellence, hardly.

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[1]The person who apparently does not want high self-esteem and stoutly resists attempts by his psychiatrist and peers to build up his self-esteem is not an exception here. He actually wants as high self-esteem as he feels is feasible

Summary of Chapter II

The essence of the theory of human motivation proposed in these pages is: all human behavior is motivated by a desire for an awareness of good possessed by self. This awareness is twofold: when our senses inform us of the possession of some desired good we call this sense pleasure; a reflective, psychological awareness of good (by "good" we mean anything desired by the individual in question) possessed by self is what is commonly called self-esteem. Synonymous for our purposes with self-esteem are the terms self-regard, self-respect, pride, amour propre, self-worth, good self-concept, good self-image, ego strength, and sense of personal dignity. Thus, all human behavior is motivated by either or a combination of sense pleasure and self-esteem.

Among the various writers who have singled out self-esteem as the explanation for all human behavior are Alfred Adler (striving for superiority), Mark Twain (the necessity of securing one's own approval), psychologists Snygg and Combs (preserving and enhancing the phenomenal self), and psychologists McCall and Simmons (legitimating role-identity). Differing from our own theory, the above authors do not assign any independent motivational role to sense pleasure. However, we have been anticipated by English philosopher

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in the light of his past and his circumstances. He is afraid of the greater self-esteem loss that may come if he is coaxed out of his sheltering "I'm no good" attitude and then is crushed by new experiences that further deepen his "I'm not OK" feeling. It can be more tolerable never to have tried one's wings than to have tried them and crashed.

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Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) who traced all behavior to the two motives of sensuality and glorying (seeking high self-regard). His contemporary, French essayist Jean La Placette, proposed the same theory. These gentlemen however did not make an extensive and systematic development of this particular point.

Awareness of good possessed by self gives the individual psychological pleasure. This and sense pleasure embrace all the pleasures that man feels. The desire for sense pleasure is an entity in its own right and cannot be reduced to self-esteem, although customarily we do derive self-esteem from experienced sense pleasures. Although less obvious than sense pleasure, the self-esteem motivation is more pervasive and powerful. For this reason we sometimes refer to our theory as the "self-esteem theory of human motivation."

Human beings are motivated in all they do by a desire for happiness. Happiness is satisfied desire. Therefore we are happy to the extent that our two basic desires, for sense pleasure and for self-esteem, are satisfied. The desire for self-esteem being much more powerful, the individual's happiness will be in proportion to his degree of solid self-esteem. Studies have shown a close correlation between happiness and self-esteem. Happiness, pleasure, satisfied desire, and awareness of good possessed by self, on analysis, turn out to be one and the same thing.

We are not proposing that the individual's level of self-esteem is a reliable criterion for his personal excellence. The person's awareness of his excellence (self-esteem)

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is not a reliable measure of his excellence because his subjective self-evaluation can so easily be based upon false personal standards, or low standards, or self-deception.

CHAPTER III

WAYS OF INCREASING OR MAINTAINING SELF-ESTEEM

Sources of Self-Esteem

Self-esteem is awareness of good possessed by self. Therefore, any goods possessed by self are factors contributing to self-esteem. Also, any goods which one thinks he possesses, but does not, equally contribute. Thus, helping to increase or maintain self-esteem is any good, actual or potential, that one can consider as his own: his ancestry, nationality, affiliation with other groups, physical attributes and competencies, intelligence, achievements, material possessions, virtues, aspirations, talents, friends and loved ones (and any good that they possess, inasmuch as his identification with them can lead him to take pride in their excellences), social status, attention and acceptance and love from others, one's standard of values, his beliefs, profession, chances for advancement—the list is endless.

The factors contributing to self-esteem are the topic of the excellent book The Antecedents of Self-Esteem by Stanley Coopersmith. He groups the "several major conditions and experiences that seem to be associated with the development of positive and negative self-attitudes" into three

categories—success, values and aspirations, and defenses.[1] Success has four elements: power—the ability to influence and control others; significance—the attention, acceptance and affection from others; virtue—adherence to moral and ethical standards; and competence—successful achievement. Whatever success the individual thinks he has in any of these areas enhances his self-esteem. Coopersmith's conclusion about values and aspirations is somewhat ambiguous. He suggests that an individual may enhance his self-esteem by stressing the value of areas where he is more competent and minimizing the value of his less effective areas. However, "evidence on this point is scant." Also, he assumes that the gap between aspirations and performance contributes to low self-esteem, but this assumption has only "mixed and uncertain empirical support." By defenses Coopersmith means the individual's strategy and ingenuity in interpreting his experiences in such a way as to maintain or enhance his self-esteem. These strategies include but are still broader than the standard defense mechanisms. Summing up, Coopersmith says that we enhance our awareness of good not only by acquiring more good, but also by juggling our subjective attitudes, i.e., by value shifts and by defenses.

Coopersmith refers us to William James' treatment of the same problem. James' analysis "provides us with three possible influences upon self-esteem." James is more

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[1]Stanley Coopersmith, The Antecedents of Self-Esteem (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman & Co., 1967), p. 38.

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categorical then Coopersmith regarding the role that values and aspirations play in influencing our self-esteem. He says:

> With no attempt there can be no failure; with no failure no humiliation. So our self-feeling in this world depends entirely on what we back ourselves to be and do. It is determined by the ratio of our actualities to our supposed potentialities; a fraction of which our pretensions are the denominator and the numerator of our success: thus, Self-esteem = $\frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$. Such a fraction may be increased as well by diminishing the denominator as by increasing the numerator. To give up pretensions is as blessed a relief as to get them gratified; and where disappointment is incessant and the struggle unending, this is what men will always do.[1]

By pretensions James seems to mean aspirations, standards, values, i.e., what we feel we should be, and what some refer to as our "ideal self-image." He develops more vividly this influence of ideal self-image upon our self-esteem:

> I, who for the time have staked my all on being a psychologist, am mortified if others know much more psychology than I. But I am contented to wallow in the grossest ignorance of Greek. My deficiencies there give me no sense of personal humiliation at all. Had I 'pretensions' to be a linguist, it would have been just the reverse. So we have the paradox of a man shamed to death because he is only the second pugilist or the second oarsman in the world. That he is able to beat the whole population of the globe minus one is nothing; he has 'pitted' himself to beat that one; and as long as he doesn't do that nothing else counts. He is to his own regard as if he were not, indeed he is not.[2]

The other two influences on self-esteem that Coopersmith finds in James' theory are success and "the value placed

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[1] William James, The Principles of Psychology, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1910), 1:310.

[2] Ibid.

upon extensions of self." By success he means how well a man measures up to society's standards for material status.

> The normal provocative of self-feeling is one's actual success or failure, and the good or bad actual position one holds in the world. A man . . . with powers that have uniformly brought him success with place and wealth and friends and fame, is not likely to be visited by the morbid diffidences and doubts about himself which he had when he was a boy, whereas he who has made one blunder after another and still lies in middle life among the failures at the foot of the hill is liable to grow all sicklied over with self-distrust, and to shrink from trials with which his powers can really cope.

James' third source of self-esteem, extensions of self, includes

> the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic process, but his clothes and his house, his wife and his children, his ancestors and his friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels 'triumphant'; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down—not necessarily in the same degree for each thing but in much the same way for all.

Also included in extension of self is a man's social self:

> . . . social self which is the recognition he gets from his peers. . . . A man has as many social selves as there are people who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any of these, his images, is to wound him.[1]

The sources of self-esteem mentioned by James and by Coopersmith are much the same, with the exception that the latter gives more place to ego defense mechanisms.

Building upon the contributions of James and Coopersmith, the following is our own analysis of the means we use to maintain or enhance our self-esteem. Self-esteem is

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[1] Principles of Psychology, vol. 1, pp. 291-93, quoted in Coopersmith, Antecedents, p. 30.

awareness (valid or illusory) of good (anything desired) possessed (actually or potentially) by self (directly or vicariously). This reveals a number of possible avenues for enhancement of self-esteem.

First, with regard to good, we can divide this into the testimony of others (social approval) and good which we possess in a manner not immediately dependent upon the opinion of others. The former is the attention, acceptance, admiration, friendship, love, etc., which we receive from others and which conveys to us the implicit message that there exists in us some good that has merited this recognition. The second type of good is that which we have and take comfort in regardless of the opinions of others—our own qualities, achievements, and possessions. Thus a man may derive self-esteem from being able to exert power over others, despite possible unpopularity. "They may hate me, but I can make or break any of them," a certain type exults. The mountain man, trapper or hermit of old had a quiet pride, or perhaps a fierce pride, in his survival skills, even though no one else might know of them, much less praise him for them. A J. Paul Getty may lament that Elsa Maxwell and others consider him a bore, but he consoles himself with the thought of his success in amassing billions. A Thomas More may be denounced or pitied by friends and foe alike for his intransigence, but he has the consolation that he is being true to his principles.

The nature of good as "anything desired" opens another possibility for enhancing or preserving self-esteem. This is

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the method, mentioned by James and Coopersmith, of adapting our aspirations, ambitions and "pretensions" to what is most feasible, considering our circumstances. In effect, this is adjusting our definition of the desirable to suit our situation. Each person can increase his awareness of good possessed by adapting his concept of good to what he already has or is very likely to get. The pro football player can be expected to rate "physical coordination" higher in the hierarchy of values than does the college professor. Rather than call this process self-deception it seems more accurate to refer to it as a "placing of emphasis" or "personal value system" or some equivalent phrase.

Considering the qualifications on the word "awareness" means we can increase self-esteem either by acquiring more good, or increasing our illusory awareness of good possessed, that is, by self-deception. This we do either by a variety of ego defense mechanisms which aim at protecting us from loss of self-esteem, or by what we will choose to call ego-enhancement mechanisms. We will devote a later section to a fuller description of our ingenious means of self-deception.

Another source of self-esteem is our estimation of what the future holds in store for us. Good possessed only potentially is a great comfort to us, as we have pointed out previously. As long as we have an ego-ace-in-the-hole in the form of a dream, a hope, an ambition, we can laugh at the present slings and arrows of fate. But this can prove to be a two-edged sword: having high ambitions can give us a lift

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while we can still entertain hopes of fulfilling them, but as Coopersmith and James pointed out, when we fail to achieve them, the gap between aspirations and success, between actuality and ideal self-image, lowers our self-esteem.

The fact that we derive self-esteem from the success of persons and groups with which we identify opens another avenue of increasing self-esteem. We can be selective in our process of identification. We join the best fraternity or country club (if possible), choose our friends for their qualities that we consider to be excellences, identify with athletic teams that have a good chance of winning, etc. We will consider this process of identification in more detail in a later section.

We protect our self-esteem from loss by using this process in reverse. We try to dissociate ourselves from persons or groups that would reflect unfavorably on us. Only hardcore fans care to identify with a team with a 0-11 record. The number of those who were willing to admit having voted for Nixon diminished sharply after Watergate. In this same genre we can include racial discrimination.

In addition, to avoid awareness of lack of good possessed we employ another technique, which we have not previously mentioned. This is to diminish our level of awareness in itself. This comes under the heading of "blowing your mind," a curious phenomenon which owes its popularity at least in part to the temporary surcease it offers from a hurting ego. After a couple of drinks we can forget our troubles and

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inhibitions. Narcotics and other devices for temporarily paralyzing our critical faculties accomplish the same end.[1] Sleep, by temporarily eliminating awareness itself, also helps us to escape from a painful awareness of lack of good possessed. Suicide is the ultimate gambit in this genre.

At this point we are not clear just where in this schema to locate another device we all use to avoid awareness of lack of good possessed, that is, withdrawal from situations which are likely to cause us a vivid awareness of that lack. Most prominent is social withdrawal, autism being the extreme.

The following outline sums up the ways in which we seek to increase or preserve our awareness of good possessed, i.e., self-esteem. Where the term "positive" appears it signifies ways to increase self-esteem; "negative" means ways of avoiding loss of self-esteem. The various categories are not always mutually exclusive. We do not claim the list is exhaustive; undoubtedly there are general ways of increasing self-esteem which have escaped our attention.

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[1]We are not presenting this as the only appeal that alcohol and narcotics offer.

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Ways of Preserving or Increasing Psychological Awareness of Good Possessed by Self

- **I. awareness of good**
  - from testimony of others
    - P—honor, glory, fame, respect, friendship, love, etc.
    - N—avoid contempt, ridicule, aversion, hate, being ignored, etc.
  - from own qualities, achievements, possessions, etc.
    - P—power, intelligence, ancestry, wealth, duty well done, virtue, talents, beliefs, values, etc.
    - N—avoid sickness, failure, deformity, moral evil, etc.
- **II. awareness**
  - valid
    - P—acquire more actual good
    - N—avoid loss of actual good
  - illusory
    - P—ego-enhancement devices: day-dreams, identification with character in novels, movies, TV, athletics, etc.
    - N—ego-defense mechanisms: repression, projection, fixation, etc.
- **III. good possessed**
  - presently —as in I and II
  - potentially—in hopes, aspirations, ambitions
- **IV. self**
  - identical
    - P—as in I, II, and III
    - N—as in I, II, and III
  - expanded self
    - P—by identification with higher prestige persons or groups
    - N—by dissociation from lower prestige persons or groups (includes discrimination)
- **V. level of awareness**
  - heightened—drugs taken to increase level of sensory awareness
  - decreased —diminish awareness of personal deficiencies and problems by use of drugs, alcohol, sleep, and suicide

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The Desire for Esteem from Others

Our lives seem to be ruled by our desire for approval from others. We want to be noticed, accepted, praised, loved, admired, respected, held in high esteem. Give a few moments consideration to your behavior and your plans and reveries and you will find the great bulk of them traceable to this desire for social approval from the "significant others" in your life. Writers down through the ages have commented on the sweeping importance of this motivation in our lives.

Over two thousand years ago Plato developed this theme in his Symposium. He uses as his literary vehicle a group of friends dining and discussing love. Plato presents as his main protagonist Socrates, who tells the group of his philosophy of love, which he learned from Diotima of Mantineia, "a woman wise in this and many other kinds of knowledge . . . she was my instructress in the art of love. . . ."[1] Diotima has taught Socrates that men are motivated by their desire for social approval, as widespread and as lasting as possible, which she refers to as the "love of the immortality of fame." She says:

> "Of that, Socrates, you may be assured—think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are stirred to run all risks greater far than they would have run for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, for the sake of leaving

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[1]Plato, The Portable Plato, ed. by Scott Buchanan (New York: The Viking Press, 1948), p. 159.

> behind them a name which shall be eternal. . . . I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue. . . ."[1]

Socrates expresses his agreement with the views of his teacher:

> Such, Phaedrus—and I speak not only to you, but to all of you—were the words of Diotima; and I am persuaded of their truth.[2]

Aristotle presents a similar motivation in his description of what he considers to be the most excellent type of man, the proud man, referred to in some translations as the magnanimous man. This proud man "thinks himself worthy of great things" and is quite correct in his estimation.

> Now the proud man, since he deserves most, must be good in the highest degree; for the better man always deserves more, and the best man most. Therefore the truly proud man must be good. . . . Therefore it is hard to be truly proud; for it is impossible without nobility and goodness of character.[3]

And what motivates this truly proud man? First and foremost he seeks honor, that is, esteem from others:

> If, then, he deserves and claims great things, and above all the great things, he will be concerned with one thing in particular. Dessert is relative to external goods; and the greatest of these, we should say, is that which we render to the gods, and which people of position most aim at, and which is the prize appointed for the noblest deeds; and this is honour: that is surely the greatest of external goods. . . . And even apart from argument it is with honour that proud men appear to be concerned; for it is honour that they chiefly claim, but in accordance with their desserts.[4]

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[1]Ibid., p. 167. [2]Ibid., p. 172.

[3]Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 4. 3.

[4]Ibid., ch. 3.

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Whereas Aristotle applauds this human desire for honor, Augustine, 600 years later and from the point of view of the Christian saint, condemns it as an enemy to love for God. But both agree as to its powerful motivating force:

> . . . the love of praise which goes around as it were canvassing and collecting votes for the advancement of one's personal distinction. It still tempts me even when I condemn it in myself; indeed it tempts me even in the very act of condemning it; often in our contempt of vainglory we are merely being all the more vainglorious. . . .[1]

Although love for honor is distinct from vainglory, they are both expressions of man's desire for the approval of his peers.

In the same tradition as Augustine but 1200 years later, Blaise Pascal, who possessed the unusual combination of mathematical genius and psychological insight, had some trenchant things to say about man's penchant for social approval. Arthur Lovejoy, in his scholarly and perceptive Reflections on Human Nature, cites quotes from the Giraud edition of Pascal's Pensées:[2]

> The quest of glory (la recherche de la gloire) is the quality that is most ineffaceable from the heart of man. . . . However much of health and of essential comforts he may have, he is not satisfied unless he have a place in men's esteem. . . . The sweetness (douceur) of glory is so great that we love any object to which it is attached, even death.

And again:

> Vanity is so anchored in man's heart that a soldier, a camp-follower, a cook, a porter, boast and wish to have

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[1]Augustine, The Confessions of St. Augustine, trans. by Rex Warner (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), p. 252.

[2]Arthur Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 132.

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> admirers; and the philosophers wish the same; and those who write against the desire for glory, glory in having written well; and those who read it, desire to have glory for having read it; and I who write this have perhaps the same desire; and also those who will read what I write.

Contemporary with Pascal but totally opposed in ideology is English philosopher John Locke, who agrees with Pascal on this point if no other:

> He who imagines commendation and disgrace not to be strong motives to men, to accommodate themselves to the opinions and rules of those with whom they converse, seems little skilled in the nature or history of mankind: the greatest part whereof he shall find to govern themselves chiefly, if not solely, by this law of fashion; and so they do that which keeps them in reputation with their company, little regarding the laws of God or the magistrate. . . .[1]

A century later than Locke, shrewd observer of human behavior Dr. Samuel Johnson writes in his weekly journal The Rambler:

> Proportionate to the prevalence of the love of praise is the variety of means by which its attainment is attempted. Every man, however hopeless his pretensions may appear, to all but himself, has some project by which he hopes to rise to reputation; some art by which he imagines that the attention of the world will be attracted; some quality, good or bad, which discriminates him from the common herd of mortals, and by which others may be persuaded to love, or compelled to fear him.[2]

John Adams of Boston adds his agreement in describing a passion that was to carry him to the presidency of the United States and into a determined glory-rivalry with Thomas Jefferson. Adams lamented on his deathbed "Thomas Jefferson still lives." In his Discourses on Davila he says:

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[1]John Locke, Essays Concerning Human Understanding, Bk. II, chap. 28, sec. 12.

[2]Samuel Johnson, The Rambler (London: Jones & Co., 1825), No. 164.

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> The same nature therefore has imposed another law, that of promoting the good, as well as respecting the rights of mankind, and has sanctioned it by other rewards and punishments. The rewards in this case, in this life, are esteem and admiration of others; the punishments are neglect and contempt; nor may anyone imagine that these are not as real as the others. The desire of the esteem of others is as real a want of nature as hunger; and the neglect and contempt of the world as severe a pain as the gout or stone. . . . Every personal quality, and every blessing of fortune, is cherished in proportion to its capacity of gratifying this universal affection for the esteem, the sympathy, admiration and congratulations of the public.[1]

I am persuaded that all men do all things for fame. (Plato). Honor is the greatest of external goods. (Aristotle.) The quest of glory is the quality that is most ineffaceable from the heart of man. (Pascal). Every good thing is cherished in proportion to the public esteem it may bring us. (Adams). All this testimony as to the basic and all-powerful nature of our desire for esteem from others seems opposed to the principal thesis of this study, namely, that our most basic and compelling motivation is our desire for self-esteem. Actually, this testimony is supportive of rather than contradictory to our thesis. Why are we so avid for social approval? Primarily, to reinforce our self-esteem. Esteem from others conveys to us the message "you possess good which merits our approval." This bolsters our self-image. This theme we will develop at length in the next section. Thus, testimony as to the basic and powerful nature of our desire for social approval is a fortiori testimony supporting the basic and powerful nature of our desire for self-esteem.

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[1] John Adams, The Works of John Adams (Boston: Charles C. Little, 1851), 1: 234.

We Desire Esteem from Others in Order to Reinforce Self-Esteem

The fact that we seek the esteem of others in order to reinforce our self-esteem is of importance throughout this study and thus deserves further examination.

The central theme of Arthur Lovejoy's excellent book Reflections on Human Nature is the overwhelming importance in human behavior of the motivations which he refers to as approbativeness (desire for the esteem from others), self-approbativeness (self-esteem), and emulation (desire for superiority to others). Emulation, or emulativeness, he clearly sees as deriving from the desire for self-esteem. We desire to be superior to others as a proof to ourselves of our own excellence.

> Nor does Hume neglect the potency of the passion of emulativeness, which is of course a form of the desire for self-esteem.[1]

However, on the relation between self-esteem and approbativeness Lovejoy is ambiguous. He cites some writers who can be interpreted as favoring the position that self-esteem is the more basic and approbativeness is the derivative, and other quotes lend themselves to the opposite interpretation.

Favoring the "approbativeness is more basic" position, Lovejoy cites Jacques Abbadie, a "French Protestant theologian famous in his day, and of considerable influence, especially in England, to which he emigrated."

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[1]Lovejoy, Reflections, p. 187.

> Nor will Abbadie admit that the craving for the esteem of others is a derivative of self-esteem, that the good opinion of our fellows is valued simply because "it confirms the good opinion we have of ourselves." For the two desires vary independently; and men in general, he thinks, "prefer to have faults that are esteemed than good qualities which society (le monde) does not esteem," and like "to gain consideration for qualities which they know very well they do not possess."[1]

In response to Abbadie's comments we offer the following considerations. When we observe in another the desire to be praised for qualities which "he knows he does not possess," are we certain that he is truly convinced of his lack of those qualities? He may protest as much, but may not his desire for praise in reality be a willingness to be convinced that he is wrong in his self-deprecation? He wants to be reassured that he truly does possess those praised qualities. If a person is truly convinced that he does not have such and such good qualities, he is likely to be somewhat suspicious, rather that pleased, when he is praised for those qualities. "Does this flatterer take me for a fool? What is he trying to set me up for?" However, on those occasions when men do take pleasure in having a reputation which they know full well is not justified, we suggest that their pleasure in basking in public esteem derives from its self-esteem value. First, there may be a feeling of self-congratulation on one's cleverness at having thus gulled the public. Second, even though one knows that the immediate reason for the admiration is false, still in the glow of receiving the admiration one can easily shove into the back of his mind that falsity and "kid himself" into

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[1] Ibid., p. 161.

thinking that the praise is somehow well-deserved. Also, the mere fact of receiving attention, even were it adverse attention, can contribute to our self-esteem. "Better to be criticized than ignored," is a sentiment one sometimes hears. A fortiori, better to be falsely praised than ignored. Another consideration: recognized false praise can be pleasing if it provides entree to some other advantage, let us say business success, which in turn is desired as a testimony to our competence, i.e., is a self-esteem booster.

In response to Abbadie's other comment, that men prefer to have faults that are esteemed than good qualities which society does not esteem, perhaps such men agree with society's judgment, and consider those "faults" to actually be good qualities, and those "good qualities" to be of little value. Thus awareness of possession of the "faults" boosts one's self-esteem. In those cases where the individual recognizes society's standards as false, most of what we have said in the previous paragraph applies.

Supporting the "self-esteem is more basic" position, i.e., the contention that we desire social approval (attention, fame, admiration, love, etc.) in order to confirm our sense of self-worth, we find the following passages in Lovejoy. He quotes the English philosopher Hume:

> This constant habit of surveying ourselves, as it were, in reflection, keeps alive all the sentiments of right and wrong, and begets, in noble natures, a certain reverence for themselves as well as for others, which is the surest guardian of every virtue. . . . Our moral sentiment is itself a feeling chiefly of that nature, and our regard to a character with others seems to arise only from a care

> of preserving a character with ourselves; and in order to attain this end, we find it necessary to prop our tottering judgment on the correspondent approbation of mankind.[1]

Here Hume, according to Lovejoy, is suggesting "that the desire for the approval of others is merely a derivative of self-esteem, as a means of corroborating or correcting our good opinions of our own favorable judgments of ourselves, or our qualities, or behavior; self-admiration is, here, apparently the more fundamental passion."

Also, Lovejoy presents Rousseau proposing that the difference between savages and civilized man consists in the former's tendency to "live within himself," that is, to derive his sense of his self-esteem from his own testimony, whereas civilized man "lives outside himself," deriving his sense of worth from the testimony of others. The savage is not aware that:

> there exists a kind of men who comptent pour quelque chose les regards du reste de l'univers, who look upon the thoughts of the rest of the world about them as a thing of consequence—men who are able to be happy and content with themselves upon the testimony of others rather than their own. Such is, in fact, the true cause of all these differences [between the savage and civilized man]: the savage lives in himself, l'homme sociable, the socialized man, always outside of himself. He is capable of living only in the opinion of others, and it is, so to say, solely from their judgment that he draws the feeling of his own existence.[2]

In this passage Rousseau has presented the savage as not concerned with the opinions of others. However, in another of his works, operating no doubt upon the principle that a foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,

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[1]Ibid., p. 183. [2]Ibid., p. 231.

he assures us of the contrary, as Lovejoy points out:

> For, he assures us, among savages, "public esteem is the only good to which each of them aspires, and which they all of them merit." In short, le bon savage lives "outside of himself" more than civilized man does.[1]

In the final analysis then, Rousseau presents both civilized and savage man as "living outside himself," deriving the "feeling of his own existence" from the judgment of others.

Some of Lovejoy's own comments also lend support to the conclusion that esteem from others is sought in order to increase our self-esteem.

> It has, indeed, been questioned whether self-esteem is not a derivative from approbativeness, and whether some dim sense of a potential external approver is not always present in it. But I shall assume it to be a fact that it can exist without an explicit reference to any actual thought of others about oneself, so that one finds a present satisfaction simply in thinking that one is—or is about to be—the proper subject of favorable adjectives, or a present dissatisfaction—which is usually, I think, in most men more intense and more potent as a determinant of behavior than the corresponding satisfaction—in thinking of oneself as characterizable by disparaging or condemnatory adjectives.[2]

Here he is at least conceding self-esteem an existence not derived from "approbativeness." And of interest although not immediately pertinent to our present discussion, is his point that fear of the loss of self-esteem is an even more powerful motivator than is desire for increased self-esteem.

Lovejoy indicates that esteem from others contributes to self-esteem:

> Self-approbation is supported by the approbation of others; it is easier to feel satisfied with your qualities or your acts or performances if your fellows appear to think highly of them.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 233. [2]Ibid., p. 100. [3]Ibid.

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Then he points out that self-esteem may exist even where the desire for the approval of others is absent, or seems to be absent:

> On the other hand, self-esteem may take the form of an indifference to or contempt for the opinion of other persons, or of some classes or types of other persons. The individual esteems himself the more because he is, or believes himself to be, unconcerned about the esteem of his neighbors; and those who give alms in secret perhaps gain more in enhanced self-esteem than they lose through the repression of their approbativeness.[1]

He lends further support to the conclusion that self-esteem is the more basic and powerful motive when he remarks that it can override "all other self-regarding motives."

> Thus, though the desire to have a favorable opinion of one's own behavior or performances is undeniably, in a sense an egoistic or self-regarding motive it is capable of counteracting all other self-regarding motives, and of introducing a kind of impersonality into the determination of the action of individuals.[2]

We find more explicit support for our contention that we desire esteem from others in order to increase our self-esteem in other writers. In William James we find:

> A man's Social Self is the recognition which he gets from his mates. We are not only gregarious animals, liking to be in sight of our fellows, but we have an innate propensity to get ourselves noticed, and noticed favorably, by our kind. No more fiendish punishment could be devised, were such a thing physically possible, than that one should be turned loose in society and remain absolutely unnoticed by all the members thereof. If no one turned round when we entered, answered when we spoke, or minded what we did, but if every person we met 'cut us dead,' and acted as if we were non-existing things, a kind of rage and impotent despair would ere long well up in us, from which the cruellest bodily tortures would be a relief; for these would make us feel that, however bad might be

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[1] Ibid., p. 101.

[2] Ibid., p. 103.

> our plight, we had not sunk to such a depth as to be unworthy of attention at all.[1]

The thing he has singled out as the supreme personal evil, worse than "the cruellest bodily tortures" is the feeling of being unworthy of attention. A feeling of being unworthy is precisely a lack of self-esteem. Why is lack of attention, and thus lack of esteem from our fellows, so terrible a thing? Because it leads to our feeling unworthy, to our lack of self-esteem.

Coopersmith also sees William James as holding that social esteem is desired because of its effect on self-esteem:

> "A man has as many social selves as there are people who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind. To wound any one of these, his images, is to wound him." The enhancement of a man's extended self, be it his body, race, father, or reputation, would thus be expected to raise self-esteem, and derogation would be expected to have the opposite effect.[2]

Coopersmith finds sociologist G. H. Mead proposing the same idea:

> The end result of regarding and speaking to and of himself as others have spoken is that he assumes the properties of a social object. When this occurs he tends to conceive of himself as having the characteristics and value that others attribute to him. . . . From Mead's formula we would conclude that self-esteem is largely derived from the reflected appraisal of others.[3]

Many authors have had the same insight. In Laughter and Liberation Harvey Mindess says:

> The data before us suggest that being treated as trivial or inconsequential is far more damaging to our

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[1] James, Principles, 1:293.

[2] Coopersmith, Antecedents, p. 30. [3] Ibid., p. 31.

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> self-esteem than any experience we can name. It appears, therefore, that above all else we need to matter: to be taken seriously for better or worse.
>
> Our egos require it. Our pride, our conceit requires that other people look on us as important, that they treat us with respect. Otherwise, we are afraid that we amount to nothing.[1]

In his work On Narcissism Sigmund Freud says:

> Everything we possess or achieve, every remnant of the primitive feeling of omnipotence that experience has corroborated, helps to exalt the self-regard . . . where the erotic life is concerned not being loved lowers the self-regarding feelings, while being loved raises them. . . . Love itself, in the form of longing and deprivation, lowers the self-regard; whereas to be loved, to have love returned, and to possess the beloved object exalts it again.[2]

In this passage Freud offers us the insight that everything we possess or achieve, not only the social esteem we receive, serves to raise our self-esteem.

Aquinas proposes the question "Whether the actions of others are a cause of pleasure to us?" and in his response is the following that is pertinent to our present issue:

> . . . the action of another may cause us pleasure in three ways. . . . Secondly, from the fact that another's action makes us to know or appreciate our own good; and for this reason men take pleasure in being praised or honored by others, because, to wit, they thus become aware of some good existing in themselves. . . . And as love is for something great, so it is pleasant to be loved and admired by others, inasmuch as a man thus becomes aware of his own goodness and greatness, through their giving pleasure to others.[3]

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[1]Harvey Mindess, Laughter and Liberation (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Co., 1971), p. 128.

[2]Sigmund Freud, A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. by John Rickman, M.D. (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 120.

[3]Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York: Benziger Bros., Inc., 1947), 1: 730.

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Some contemporary testimony. M. D. Vernon, in his book Human Motivation, says:

> Most people act in such a way as would seem likely to maintain their pride, enhance their self-esteem and the esteem of others; and to protect themselves from contempt, disapproval and frustration. Since self-esteem depends to a considerable extent on the esteem given by members of the groups to which people belong, they seek to harmonize their behaviour and their ideas about themselves to accord with the opinions of others.[1]

In his Toward a Theory of Personality and Neurosis, Silverberg narrows our self-esteem sources down to two, personal effectiveness and social approval:

> Throughout life self-esteem has these two sources: an inner source, the degree of effectiveness of one's own aggression; and an external source, the opinions of others about oneself. Both are important, but the former is the steadier and more dependable one; the latter is always more uncertain. Unhappy and insecure is the man who, lacking an adequate inner source for his self-esteem, must depend for this almost wholly upon external sources. It is the condition seen by the psychotherapist almost universally among his patients.[2]

In conclusion:

> The important thing, however, is the generally acknowledged observation that we find our self-esteem through the past (and present) experiences of social acceptance.[3]

The testimony in the several preceding pages supports the following simple logical analysis: Self-esteem is awareness of possessing good, contributes to our self-esteem; social

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[1] M. D. Vernon, Human Motivation (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969), p. 115.

[2] William V. Silverberg, "Toward a Theory of Personality and Neurosis," in An Outline of Psychoanalysis, eds. Thompson, Mazer and Wittenberg (New York: The Modern Library, 1955), p. 67.

[3] Loring Woodman, Perspectives in Self-Awareness (Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publ. Co., 1973), p. 5.

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approval conveys to us the message "there is something in you that calls forth our approval"; this message heightens our awareness of good that we possess, and thus increases our self-esteem.

Reality Principle

Our appetite for sense pleasure is, in its more obvious aspects, quite satiable. Sometimes we satisfy our desire for the pleasure of eating or drinking to the degree that additional food or drink presented to us brings a feeling of revulsion. Sexual satiety is a fact of common experience. Judging from the frequency with which they treat the subject, Ann Landers and Dear Abby are snowstormed with letters from wives complaining that their husband's sex drive is permanently satiated. One is reminded of Joan Rivers' joke about telling her husband that she had heard that sex is good for the complexion and that she intended to have sex three hundred times during the coming year. "Great," he responded, "sign me up for two." Legend, possibly apocryphal, has Sigmund Freud going into sexual dormancy at about the age of 40, or 45, according to other stories. At least, his wife wrote Dear Abby letters to a friend bewailing her fate.

But of self-esteem we never get enough. Our appetite is insatiable. We all have the desire to be number 1, the greatest, the best. We may proclaim modest ambitions, but satisfy those ambitions and we are going on for higher things, excelsior, ever upward. Each of us has the urge to achieve his own concept of perfection, a perfection that expands and

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yet recedes as we progress. John Adams commented on the ubiquity and insatiability of our passion for public esteem and thus for self-esteem:

> If we attempt to analyze our ideas still further upon this subject, we shall find, that the expressions we have hitherto used, attention, consideration, and congratulation, comprehend with sufficient accuracy the general object of the passion for distinction, in the greater part of mankind. There are not a few--from him who burned a temple, to the multitudes who plunge into low debauchery--who deliberately seek it by crimes and vices. The greater number, however, search for it, neither by vices nor virtues; but by the means which common sense and every day's experience show, are most sure to obtain it; by riches, by family records, by play, and other frivolous personal accomplishments. . . . But for our humiliation, we must still remember, that even in these esteemed, beloved, and adored characters, the passion, although refined by the purest moral sentiments, and intended to be governed by the best principles, is a passion still; and therefore, like all other human desires, unlimited and insatiable. No man was ever contented with any given share of this human adoration. When Caesar declared that he had lived enough to glory, Caesar might deceive himself, but he did not deceive the world, who saw his declaration contradicted by every action of his subsequent life. Man constantly craves for more, even when he has no rival.[1]

Weight is lent to the above testimony by the fact that it comes from a man who received the highest honor the United States can confer, election to the presidency. Sartre puts the same thought more tersely: "man is the desire to be God."

When Freud speaks of the infant's desire for omnipotence, he is describing the basic condition of all of us. When he describes the child's all-consuming narcissism, this is you and me he is describing, the basic you and me, underlying the adjustments we have been forced to make as a result

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[1]Adams, Works, 6: 248.

of the impact of reality on our lives. The ego of the infant, Freud observes, "deems itself the possessor of all perfections." To this feeling we all strive to return, insofar as reality permits us. In Freud's thought, the infant feels a sense of omnipotence, generated by the fact that his every wish is granted. Throughout life we seek to recover this sense of omnipotence, of being the possessor of all perfections.

> To this ideal ego is now directed the self-love which the real ego enjoyed in childhood. The narcissism seems to be now displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, deems itself the possessor of all perfections. As always where the libido is concerned, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to forego his narcissistic perfection in his childhood; and if, as he develops, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and his own critical judgment is awakened, he seeks to recover the early perfection, thus wrested from him, in the form of an ego-ideal.[1]

> One more important function remains to be mentioned which we attribute to this super-ego. It is also the vehicle of the ego ideal by which the ego measures itself, which it emulates, and whose demand for ever greater perfection it strives to fulfill.[2]

The same ever-upward[3] urge is noted by Adler, citing Goethe in support:

> Among others, Goethe also points out that while perception is connected with the practical satisfaction of needs, man leads a life beyond this, a life of feelings and imagination. Thereby the coercion toward enhancement of the

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[1]Freud, On Narcissism, General Selections, p. 116.

[2]Sigmund Freud, New Introductory Lectures (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1965), p. 64.

[3]This ever-upward urge does not necessarily mean toward moral or spiritual perfection. Rather it is the urge to be Number One, supreme, all-powerful, adored.

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> self-esteem has been excellently comprehended. This also becomes clear from one of Goethe's letters to Lavater where he remarks: "This passionate desire to drive the pyramid of my existence, the base of which is given to me, as high as possible outweighs everything else and barely admits momentary forgetting."[1]

We all have the basic desire to drive the pyramid of our existence as high as possible, to fulfill the demands of our ego for ever greater perfection, to obtain a greater share of glory and adoration. But inevitably, that basic desire is modified, humbled, cut down to size, by the impact of reality. Repeated confrontations with failure, or let us say, the inability to achieve my desires in the fullest, forces me to the realization that my talents and abilities and luck are limited, and I will never be the greatest, never Number One in anything. That realization comes hard. It has to be beaten into us by sharp collisions with reality, or at least such is the case with slow learners such as myself.

Ambition to be the greatest in areas where success has some very objective standard of measurement is the first casualty in the battle with reality. I can develop a very glowing image of my ability as a tennis player, and of my potential for future greatness, as long as I am playing with inferior players. However, as soon as I move into more advanced company and suffer humiliating defeats, and this continues for some months, I am at last forced ruefully to admit that I will probably always be a very mediocre player.

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[1]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 123.

Whereas my desire for self-esteem was the motivator of my visions of being a tennis great, that same desire for self-esteem now dictates that I bow to reality and accept my limited abilities. Otherwise, with continuing exalted ambitions, the gap between expectation and performance would be too painful for my self-esteem. Acceptance of reality is hard on the self-esteem initially, but we soon learn that it is actually easier on the self-esteem in the long run. Acceptance of our limitations can spare us many a later disgruntlement. The person who attempts to maintain an exalted self-image in defiance of reality is courting suffering--he becomes known as conceited, vain, arrogant, out of touch with reality (all of which he is), and friends begin to shun him, and make biting remarks in an attempt to get him to face reality. So most of us early learn that bucking reality, at least in its more obvious aspects, is counter-productive, self-esteem-wise.

But our eagerness for a high self-image still leads us to evade reality in its less obvious aspects. Wherever we think we can get away with it--"think," in our automatic subconscious estimation--we still attempt to dodge and falsify reality. This is the phenomenon we will discuss in the section on self-deception.

Theoretically it is possible for a human being to wholeheartedly embrace truth, in all its unflattering aspects, as a friend. And this is not difficult, as long as it is a matter of some non-personal scientific truths. But when the truth begins to touch us where we live, to challenge some of

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our cherished assumptions and ideologies and self-images, then to put aside our evasions and subterfuges and ruthlessly search for ultimate realities requires a deep conviction that this is the only way to whatever type of salvation we are seeking.

Self-Deception, Ego-Defense Mechanisms and Ego-Enhancement Mechanisms

Each of us is tender and solicitous in his devotion to the preservation and enhancement of his awareness of good possessed by self. Much of this awareness consists in automatic and only partially conscious references to our identity in its manifold aspects, each with its connotation of good (I am a man, an American, a professor, have a lovely wife and children that I am proud of, have a tidy sum in the bank, have a $40,000 home almost debt-free, am one of the better tennis players in my weekend group, etc., etc.), and in the daily little touches of recognition that others give us ("strokes," as the TA people call them), and in our hopes for the future. Much of this awareness is valid, that is, an objective observer would testify that we truly do possess these goods that are a comfort to us. However, so avid are we for this awareness that we tend to "kid ourselves," unduly magnifying the good that we do not possess. Conceit, vanity, presumption, pride, are a few of the many terms we use to describe this endemic over-estimation of our own worth.

The "tails" side of the same coin is our reluctance to admit to ourselves our failings and inadequacies. We use

the utmost ingenuity to hide our faults from ourselves, but usually ingenuity is not necessary--we are willing to be deceived by the most blatant and patent subterfuges on our own behalf. Freud's ego defense mechanisms are but one part of this extensive psychic enterprise.

None of this is new to the reader. Everyone has seen ample evidence of it operating in others, and every reflective person has seen the process going on within himself. It has been a frequent theme in literature.

Let us consider in this connection a few remarks by "observers of the motions of the human heart," following which we will look at some of the particular methods we use to deceive ourselves, that is, to heighten our awareness of our own possession of good without actually increasing that possession of good. Most of the commentators we will cite on man's propensity for self-deception regard this process as an unmitigated evil. It is not the purpose of this present study to take a moral stance on issues, this one included, but merely to observe facts. Certainly the presumption is in favor of truth, truth in dealing with others, and <u>a fortiori</u>, truth in dealing with oneself. But if a defense were to be made for self-deception one might point out that the alternative in some cases is crippling depression and even self-destruction. "It is cruel to rob a man of his delusions," can apply equally well to robbing self of self's delusions.

The first witness we will offer regarding man's inclination to self-deception is Blaise Pascal (1623-1662),

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mathematician, philosopher, student of human nature, and ardent apostle of Jansenism.

> The nature of self-love and of this human self is to love only self and consider only self. But what is it to do? It cannot prevent the object of its love from being full of faults and wretchedness: it wants to be great and sees that it is small; . . . it wants to be perfect and sees that it is full of imperfections; . . . The predicament in which it thus finds itself arouses in it the most unjust and criminal passion that could possibly be imagined, for it conceives a deadly hatred for the truth which rebukes it and convinces it of its faults. It would like to do away with this truth, and not being able to destroy it as such, it destroys it, as best it can, in the consciousness of itself and others; that is, it takes every care to hide its faults both from itself and others, and cannot bear to have them pointed out or noticed.[1]

A contemporary of Pascal but a very different sort of person was Francois, duc de La Rochefoucauld (1613-1680), frequenter of sophisticated salons and confidant of Anne of Austria in her warfare of intrigue and counter-intrigue with her husband Louis XIII and Cardinal Richelieu. La Rochefoucauld is renowned for his Maxims, biting and often humorous aphorisms about human vanity. Amont his maxims are the wry observations:

> We cannot get over being deceived by our enemies and betrayed by our friends, yet we are often content to be so treated by ourselves.
>
> It is as easy to deceive ourselves without noticing it as it is hard to deceive others without their noticing it.
>
> The head is always fooled by the heart.[2]

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[1]Blaise Pascal, Pensées (London: Penguin Books, 1966), p. 347.

[2]La Rochefoucauld, Maxims (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959), #114, 115, 102.

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The last anticipates a theme Freud was to popularize two hundred years later.

In a similar vein, Samuel Johnson, always perceptive in his analysis of human affairs and delightful in the elegance of his expression:

> If it be reasonable to estimate the difficulty of any enterprise by frequent miscarriages, it may justly be concluded that it is not easy for a man to know himself, for wheresoever we turn our view, we shall find almost all, with whom we converse so nearly as to judge of their sentiments, indulging more favorable conceptions of their own virtue than they have been able to impress upon others, and congratulating themselves upon degrees of excellence, which their fondest admirers cannot allow them to have attained.[1]

At almost the same time, on this side of the Atlantic, John Adams, our second President-to-be, wrote an essay on self-delusion for the Boston Gazette. In part:[2]

> There is nothing in the science of human nature more curious, or that deserves a critical attention from every order of men so much, as that principle which moral writers have distinguished by the name of self-deceit. This principle is the spurious offspring of self-love; and is, perhaps, the source of far the greatest and worst part of the vices and calamities among mankind. . . .
>
> But, if we look abroad, shall we not see the most modest, sensible, and virtuous of the common people, almost every hour of their lives; warped and blinded by the same disposition to flatter and deceive themselves? . . . Insensible of the beams in our own eyes, are we not quick in discerning motes in those of others? Nay, however melancholy it may be, and how humbling soever to the pride of the human heart, even the few favorites of nature, who have received from her clearer understandings and more happy tempers than other men, who seem designed, under Providence, to be the great conductors of the art and science, the war and peace, the laws and religion of this lower world, are often snared by this unhappy disposition in their minds. . . .

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[1]Johnson, Rambler, No. 28.

[2]Adams, Works, 3: 433-5.

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> Such swarms of passions, avarice and ambition, servility and adulation, hopes, fears, jealousies, envy, revenge, malice, and cruelty, are continually buzzing in the world, and we are so extremely prone to mistake the impulses of these for the dictates of our consciences--that the greatest genius, united to the best disposition, will find it hard to hearken to the voice of reason, or even to be certain of the purity of his own intentions.

In our own time, Freud has probed most deeply into the workings of self-deception with his analysis of ego-defense mechanisms. These we will consider more fully later. Commenting on our endemic tendency toward self-deception, Freud says in his usual clinical, dispassionate language:

> The psychical apparatus is intolerant of unpleasure and strives to ward it off at all costs and, if the perception of reality involves unpleasure, that perception--i.e. the truth--must be sacrificed.[1]

Another contemporary witness is Herbert Fingarette, author of Self-Deception:[2]

> Were a portrait of man to be drawn, one in which there would be hightlighted whatever is most human, be it noble or ignoble, we should surely place well in the foreground man's enormous capacity for self-deception.
>
> That we deceive ourselves as well as others was no doubt appreciated of old, but it has become of quite particular, explicit interest in recent centuries in the West. (cf. Peyre, Ch. 8). A Victorian such as Bulwer-Lytton (Vol. II, p. 189) could already take it as evident that "The easiest person to deceive is one's own self." And, in the mid-twentieth century, Camus, in his last major work, The Fall, still could place the theme of self-deception at the centre of his work:
>
> ". . . after prolonged research on myself, I brought out the fundamental duplicity of the human being. Then I realized, as a result of delving in my memory, that

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Analysis: Terminable and Interminable (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959), 5: 339.

[2]Herbert Fingarette, Self-Deception (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 1-2.

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modesty helped me to shine, humility to conquer, and virtue to oppress. . . ."

The basic reason for this "fundamental duplicity of the human being" is stressed by Nathaniel Branden, disciple of Ayn Rand ("virtue of selfishness"), extoller of self-esteem and self-proclaimed hater of humility and altruism:

> So intensely does a man feel the need of a positive view of himself, that he may evade, repress, distort his judgment, disintegrate his mind--in order to avoid coming face to face with facts that would affect his self-appraisal adversely. A man who has chosen or accepted irrational standards by which to judge himself, can be driven all his life to pursue flagrantly self-destructive goals--in order to assure himself that he possesses a self-esteem which in fact he does not have.
>
> If and to the extent that men lack self-esteem, they feel driven to fake it, to create the illusion of self-esteem--condemning themselves to chronic psychological fraud--moved by the desperate sense that to face the universe without self-esteem is to stand naked, disarmed, delivered to destruction.[1]

This variety of witnesses from different backgrounds and different ideological positions have observed the constant efforts we make to "put our best foot forward" in our own estimation, even at the sacrifice of self-honesty. The purpose of this self-deception is to enhance or preserve our awareness of the good we possess--i.e., to hide our faults (Pascal), to congratulate ourselves upon our excellence (Johnson), to flatter ourselves (Adams), to have a positive view of ourselves and reassure ourselves of our self-esteem (Branden).

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[1]Nathaniel Branden, The Psychology of Self-Esteem (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1969), p. 110.

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Ego-Enhancement Mechanisms

Testimony as to man's assiduity in self-deception could be offered from a multitude of sources, but let us consider in more detail some of the techniques we use to preserve or enhance our illusory self-image. These we will refer to as ego-enhancement mechanisms. These are devices for self-delusion because they increase our awareness of good possessed without increasing the actual good possessed. The techniques we will mention are merely a few of the more common ways we find to inflate our ego without increasing our actual worth.

Prominent among techniques of ego-enhancement are day-dreams. Thurber's story of Walter Mitty strikes a responsive chord in millions of hearts. Probably most of us occasionally find ourselves receiving the Nobel prize for a cancer cure, or commanding a financial empire which has just discovered a fabulous oil deposit which will bring the OPEC cartel to its knees, or rifling bullet-like 70-yard passes for touchdown after touchdown, all in reverie. This is not a deep self-deception, since we are at no point really convinced that this is reality. Still, there is a momentary ego-gratification quite apart from any genuine excellence. We take more extended flights from reality in our identification with characters in novels, movies, TV, etc. For hours at a time we get a vicarious ego massage in the world of illusion. Although we clearly distinguish between this world of fantasy and the world of reality, still the exaltation of its heroes and heroines with whom we identify imparts a lingering after-glow of

exaltation to our own ego. A biographer of Mark Twain quotes his observation that we never outgrow this fantasy life:

> "The castle-building habit," he writes feelingly in "The $30,000 Bequest," "the day-dreaming habit--how it grows! What a luxury it becomes; how we fly to its enchantments at every idle moment, how we revel in them, steep our souls in them, intoxicate ourselves with their beguiling fantasies--oh yes, and how soon and how easily our dream-life and our material life become so intermingled and so fused together that we can't quite tell which is which, anymore." And there is an observation in The Gilded Age that has much force in this connection: "one never ceases to make a hero of one's self (in private), during life, but only alters the style of his heroism from time to time as the drifting years belittle certain gods of his admiration and raise up others in their stead that seem greater."[1]

We are seldom fully taken-in by the above illusions, but some of our illusory ego-gratifications are of a more permanent and deep-rooted nature. Samuel Johnson describes some of "the more frequently insidious":

> One sophism by which men persuade themselves that they have those virtues which they really want, is formed by the substitution of single acts for habits. A miser who once relieved a friend from the danger of a prison, suffers his imagination to dwell for ever upon his own heroic generosity; he yields his heart up to indignation at those who are blind to merit, or insensible to misery, and who can please themselves with the enjoyment of that wealth, which they never permit others to partake. From any censures of the world, or reproaches of his conscience, he has an appeal to action and to knowledge: and though his whole life is a course of rapacity and avarice, he concludes himself to be tender and liberal, because he has once performed an act of liberality and tenderness.[2]

Probably most of us have thus conferred upon ourselves an image of sterling honesty because we once returned excess change a cashier had erroneously given us. And an occasional

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[1]Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain: The Man and His Work (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), p. 106.

[2]Johnson, Rambler, No. 28.

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small donation to charity enables us to preen ourselves on our generosity. Johnson also comments on our tendency to give ourselves credit for the practice of virtue because we have occasion to praise it:

> There are men who always confound the praise of goodness with the practice, and who believe themselves mild and moderate, charitable and faithful, because they have exerted their eloquence in commendation of mildness, fidelity, and other virtues. This is an error almost universal among those that converse much with dependents, with such whose fear or interest disposes them to a seeming reverence for any declamation, however enthusiastic, and submission to any boast, however arrogant. Having none to recall their attention to their lives, they rate themselves by the goodness of their opinions, and forget how much more easily men may show their virtue in their talk than in their actions.[1]

A similar device that we all have a propensity to use is the warm glow of virtue we feel when condemning evil. When we express moral indignation at the way the younger generation is behaving, or fulminate against crime in the streets, or at corruption in high places, or express outrage at the behavior of this group or that, we may be expressing valid moral judgments or not, but certainly illusory is our unvocalized feeling that our opposition to the "bad guys" automatically makes us one of the "good guys." Our vigorous condemnation of evil is a self-conferred exoneration from evil, seldom justified. Actually, opposition to vice can be inspired by an incompatible vice as easily as by virtue. We all easily perceive that our opponents are using their moral indignation as an ego ploy ("what stinking self-righteousness,"

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[1]Ibid., No. 28.

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we self-righteously proclaim), but we become doubly indignant when someone questions the validity of our own indignation.

More frequently recognized as ego-enhancement devices are chauvinism and racial discrimination. The chauvinist is confident that the group to which he belongs (male, white, American, liberal, etc.) is superior to contrasting groups. Thus he gets a comfortable feeling of superiority to those outside his group. But is this an illusory feeling, or on the contrary, is it not valid that some groups actually are superior to others, at least in certain aspects? Certainly such is the usual sentiment of members of the group; non-members disagree.

The ego-enhancement devices we have considered--day dreams, chauvinism and discrimination, crediting ourselves with noble qualities because of an occasional good act, picturing ourselves as morally superior because of our outrage at the behavior of some persons, etc.--are but a small part of the manifold strategies we use to increase our estimation of the good possessed by self without actually increasing the good possessed by self.

More systematic attention has been given in psychological literature to a complementary strategy which we use to protect our estimation of the good possessed by self from being diminished. These psychological devices to protect our self-esteem were called to the world's attention by Sigmund Freud, given the name "defensive mechanisms,"[1] and

[1]Freud, Analysis, 5: 338.

have been one of Freud's most widely accepted concepts.

Ego-Defense Mechanisms

> Under the pressure of excessive anxiety, the ego is sometimes forced to take extreme measures to relieve the pressure. . . . All defense mechanisms have two characteristics in common: (1) they deny, falsify, or distort reality, and (2) they operate unconsciously so that the person is not aware of what is taking place.[1]

What is the source of this anxiety which is pressing on the ego? What is this reality which the ego is trying to deny, falsify, distort? I wish to present the thesis that it is a subconscious (or unconscious, to use a more properly Freudian term) intimation of a reality which, if admitted to consciousness, would cause the individual to lose self-esteem. This causes anxiety, and this the ego therefore attempts to evade by denial, distortion or falsification. That reality may be an id desire--lust or hatred--which this particular individual's self-esteem cannot accept. More frequently, it might be a back-of-the-mind realization that the individual is not as well loved and accepted by his peers as he wants to believe. The anxiety is, in general, a subconscious realization that the individual is not measuring up to his ideal self-image as well as he has tried to convince himself that he is. Thus, the ego defense mechanisms are defending against a threatened loss of self-esteem.

We will present steps in the development of this thesis, stated succinctly, and followed by supporting

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[1]Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1970), p. 47.

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statements from Freud. Most of these quotes from Freud we have already seen in other sections of this study. For a fuller understanding of these quotes, let us bear in mind that in most contexts Freud's terms super-ego, ego-ideal and ideal are interchangeable. As the ego lives up to ego-ideal, self-esteem increases with accompanying psychic pleasure. Failure to live up to ego-ideal results in painful lowering of self-regard.

1) Man seeks to live up to his ego-ideal.

> One more important function remains to be mentioned which we attribute to this super-ego. It is also the vehicle of the ego ideal by which the ego measures itself, which it emulates, and whose demand for ever greater perfection it strives to fulfil.[1]

> To the ego, therefore, living means being loved--being loved by the super-ego. . . .[2]

2) Man's happiness consists in matching his ego with his ego-ideal.

> As in childhood, to be his own ideal once more, also where sexual tendencies are concerned, is the happiness that man strives to attain.[3]

3) This living up to one's ego-ideal causes pleasure.

> There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal.[4]

4) Living up to the ego-ideal causes an increase in self-regard.

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[1]Freud, New Introductory Lectures, p. 64.

[2]Freud, The Ego and the Id, General Selections, p. 233.

[3]Freud, On Narcissism, General Selections, p. 122.

[4]Freud, Group Psychology, General Selections, p. 200.

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> Part of the self-regard is primary--the residue of childish narcissism; another part arises out of such omnipotence as experience corroborates (the fulfillment of the ego-ideal), while a third part proceeds from gratification of object-libido.[1] [Emphasis mine.]

5) Failure to live up to the ego-ideal causes displeasure and lowers self-esteem.

> And the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego ideal.
>
> . . . the misery of the melancholiac is the expression of a sharp conflict between the two faculties of his ego, a conflict in which the ideal, in an excess of sensitiveness, relentlessly exhibits its condemnations of the ego in delusions of inferiority and in self-depreciation. . . .[2]

6) The purpose of the defense mechanisms is to prevent the ego from realizing painful truths.

> . . . the ego makes use of various methods of fulfilling its task, i.e., to put it in general terms, of avoiding danger, anxiety and unpleasure. We call these devices defensive mechanisms.[3]
>
> The psychical apparatus is intolerant of unpleasure and strives to ward it off at all costs and, if the perception of reality involves unpleasure, that perception--i.e., the truth--must be sacrificed.[4]
>
> The patient's ego had been approached by an idea which proved to be incompatible, which provoked on the part of the ego a repelling force of which the purpose was defense against this incompatible idea. . . . I recognized a universal characteristic of such ideas: they were all of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed; they were all of a kind that one

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[1] Freud, On Narcissism, General Selections, p. 121.

[2] Freud, Group Psychology, General Selections, pp. 200-1.

[3] Ibid., p. 339.

[4] Freud, Psychotherapy of Hysteria, in Standard Edition, 2: 269.

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> would prefer not to have experienced, that one would rather forget. From all this there arose, as it were automatically, the thought of defence.[1]

7) Desires that one man enjoys are indignantly rejected and repressed by another man because they conflict with his ego-ideal.

> The very impressions, experiences, impulses, and desires that one man indulges or at least consciously elaborates in his mind will be rejected with the utmost indignation by another, or stifled at once even before they enter consciousness. The difference between the two, however--and here we have the conditioning factor in repression--can easily be expressed in terms of the libido-theory. We may say that the one man has set up an ideal in himself by which he measures his actual ego, while the other is without this formation of an ideal. From the point of view of the ego this formation of an ideal would be the condition of repression.[2]

8) Repression, the prototype of defense mechanisms, is an attempt to protect self-esteem.

> Repression, as we have said, proceeds from the ego; we might say with greater precision: from the self-respect of the ego.[3]

Thus, in Freud we have the message: failure of the ego to live up to the ego-ideal causes a painful lowering of self-esteem; to prevent this, the ego often distorts, falsifies and denies realities that indicate a gap between ego and ego-ideal; the strategies for denial and falsification are defense mechanisms.

This insight--that the purpose of the ego-defense mechanisms is the protection of self-esteem--has been

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[1] Freud, Psychotherapy of Hysteria, in Standard Edition, 2:269.

[2] Freud, On Narcissism, General Selections, p. 233.

[3] Ibid., p. 116.

expressed by other writers. Gardner Murphy, in a recent book entitled Outgrowing Self-Deception, states:

> The devices for selecting and filtering, structuring and unifying the system of defenses hardly ever operate in the rather mechanical fashion that was suggested up to the point at which the self entered the picture. The exclusion of information is in very large part guaranteed by another central device--the building up of a picture of the self, to be forever enhanced and defended.[1]

Nathaniel Branden denounces the futility of ego-defense mechanisms: "Self-esteem cannot be built on a foundation of self-alienation." He recites a litany of defensive mechanisms, closing each one with the antiphon: "he disowns a part of himself--in the name of protecting his self-esteem."[2]

> When a person represses certain of his thoughts and memories, because he regards them as immoral or humiliating, he disowns a part of himself--in the name of protecting his self-esteem.
>
> When a person represses certain of his emotions, because they threaten his sense of control or conflict with his notion of "strength" or "maturity" or "sophistication," he disowns . . . .
>
> When a person represses certain of his desires, because he cannot tolerate the anxiety of wondering whether or not he will attain them, an anxiety that makes him feel helpless and ineffectual, he disowns . . . .
>
> When a person represses certain aspects of his personality which seem incompatible with the standards of his "significant others," because he has tied his sense of personal worth to the approval of those "others," he disowns . . . .

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[1]Gardner Murphy, Outgrowing Self-Deception (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975), p. 44.

[2]Nathaniel Branden, The Disowned Self (Los Angeles: Nash Publ. Co., 1971), p. 88.

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It may be hasty to dismiss all ego-defense mechanisms as useless or harmful, but the relevant point here is what we attempt to accomplish by these mechanisms--protection of self-esteem.

Ernest Hilgard, in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1949, had this to say about defense mechanisms:

> Another way of looking at the mechanisms is to see them as bolstering self-esteem through self-deception. . . . If self-deception either by denial or by disguise is accepted as characteristic of a mechanism, the problem still remains as to the source of or reasons for the self-deception. The obvious interpretation is that the need for self-deception arises because of a more fundamental need to maintain or to restore self-esteem. Anything belittling to the self is to be avoided.[1]

Anna Freud on ego-defense mechanisms

Anna Freud's analysis of ego-defense mechanisms is an elaboration and extension of her father's ideas, faithful to his principles. The ego is defending against admission of impulses from the id (sex and hostility thoughts and desires) into consciousness. Why does the ego fear these impulses? Anna Freud presents three principal fears: super-ego anxiety, objective anxiety and instinctual anxiety.

The super-ego has prohibited the id impulses:

> It sets up an ideal standard, according to which sexuality is prohibited and aggression is pronounced to be anti-social.[2]

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[1]Ernest R. Hilgard, "Human Motives and the Concept of the Self," The American Psychologist, 4 (September 1949): 376-7.

[2]Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense. (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1946), p. 59.

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In children the fear is an "objective anxiety," a fear of castration by the parents for expressing sexual desires.[1] Castration fear is the prototype; this objective anxiety may also be a fear of other types of punishment by the external world.

The third type, instinctual anxiety, emerges after the individual's reality principle is sufficiently developed, and seems to be the ego's fear of being overwhelmed by the instincts.

> Robert Walder describes it as 'the danger that the ego's whole organization may be destroyed or submerged.[2]

In other words, the individual has a concern lest he become a mere animal, indulging in instinct gratification without self-control and even at the most inopportune moments.

In addition to these three principal motives for ego defense, Anna Freud mentions the adult ego's need for harmony between its conflicting impulses. The impulse cathected with less energy must be defended against, in the interests of the more powerfully cathected impulse.[3]

This analysis seems good enough as far as it goes. However, it is not extensive enough because it does not give recognition to the major sources of ego defense: fear of admitting to oneself that one is not as lovable or as competent or as successful as one would like to believe. It is not deep enough because it does not discover the common

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[1] Ibid., p. 61. [2] Ibid., p. 63.

[3] Ibid., p. 64.

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factor underlying the three types of anxiety. First, super-ego anxiety is the ego's fear of condemnation by the super-ego, or, stated in other of Freud's terms, it is the ego's fear of not living up to the ego-ideal. This gap between actual self-image and ideal self-image is a loss of self-esteem.

The "fear of castration," for those who take this concept seriously, raises the further question, why does the child fear castration? Physical pain, yes, but a more likely consideration is that it means loss of a prized possession. Self-esteem is the awareness of good possessed; loss of a prized good is a loss of self-esteem. Sigmund Freud himself recognizes this reality when he refers to the little girl's severe loss of self-esteem when she discovers that she does not have the genital equipment that a male has:

> Analyses of the remote phallic period have now taught me that in girls, soon after the first signs of penis-envy, an intense current of feeling against masturbation makes its appearance, which cannot be attributed exclusively to the educational influence of those in charge of the child. . . . I cannot explain the opposition which is raised in this way by little girls to phallic masturbation except by supposing that there is some concurrent factor which turns her violently against that pleasurable activity. Such a factor lies close at hand in the narcissistic sense of humiliation which is bound up with penis-envy, the girl's reflection that after all this is a point on which she cannot compete with boys and that it would therefore be best for her to give up the idea of doing so.[1] [Emphasis mine.]

Objective anxiety about other types of punishment can be reduced to fear of physical pain, or, more importantly, a

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Sexuality and the Psychology of Love (New York: Collier Books, 1963), pp. 190-1.

fear of decrease in parental love, which is the main source of the child's self-esteem. Correspondingly, objective anxiety in an adult is the fear of loss of a good--perhaps social approval, liberty, physical integrity, etc. Loss of a good is painful when it becomes awareness of diminished possession of good (or the threat of such), i.e., loss of self-esteem (or the threat of such).

Instinctual anxiety, the fear of being overwhelmed by instinctual desires, is clearly traceable to fear of a loss of self-esteem. How humiliating it is to "lose your cool." When the id instincts take over we have "lost control of ourselves." The person who indulges in uncontrolled and inopportune sexual or hostile behavior loses the respect of his peers and his own self-respect.

That the purpose of ego-defense mechanisms is both to protect and enhance self-esteem is recognized by Symonds in his book The Ego and The Self:

> Much has been said about "defence mechanisms." The so-called defence mechanisms are really self-defence mechanisms and oftentimes their purpose is as much self-enhancement as it is a defence against those forces which might destroy self-esteem. Most of the mechanisms result in a kind of self-deception which seems to be necessary in order to maintain, enhance, and restore the self. Repression is necessary for most persons so that they can keep their dignity and self-esteem. Rationalization, denial, and projection all help the individual to avoid facing unpleasant facts about himself.
>
> The individual is constantly on the alert to protect himself from threat or to raise his own self-esteem, and to the extent that he can perceive threats or opportunities for self-enhancement, he will act on them.[1]

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[1]Percival M. Symonds, The Ego and The Self (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 109.

Apparent exceptions to the author's above statement that the individual is constantly on the alert to increase self-esteem are those persons who frequently engage in self-deprecation, "running themselves down." The author explains that this tendency is merely a gambit, involuted and misguided, to protect and increase self-esteem:

> Tendencies toward self-punishment and self-depreciation would seem to contradict this statement, but such tendencies may only disguise hidden tendencies beneath. Just as a parent may punish a child with the hope that the child will mend his ways, so an individual may adopt masochistic tendencies in order to reap a greater reward eventually.[1]

Conclusion

Many observers of the human scene have commented on the universal human tendency to deceive oneself--to embroider and exaggerate realities favorable to one's self-image and to distort or deny realities unfavorable to self-image. Among these "ego-enhancement mechanisms" are chauvinism and discrimination, day-dream fantasies, and identification with heroes in novels, movies, TV and athletics. The psychological phenomena famous as "ego-defense mechanisms" are a part of our manifold attempts to conceal from ourselves realizations which threaten self-esteem.

Self-Deprecation, Self-Hatred, and Humility

The thesis of this study is that all human behavior is motivated by the desire to maintain and increase one's

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[1]Ibid., p. 109.

awareness of good possessed by self. However, there is a frequent type of human behavior that seems directly contradictory to that theory. Instead of focusing on and enhancing the good possessed by self, sometimes individuals engage in self-belittling, calling attention of self and others to the individual's deficiencies and faults. We will consider some of the forms of self-belittling to discover whether they are opposed to the self-esteem motivation, as they seem to be, or whether actually they are a devious and torturous manifestation of the drive for self-esteem.

The most mild and socially acceptable form of self-belittling is the occasional "modest disclaimer." A shrewd lawyer may affect the bumbling hick exterior and refer to himself as a "poor country boy." An Oscar winner may give all the credit to his writers, director, co-stars, etc. An attractive woman may protest that today she "looks a wreck." Ben Franklin tells us in his autobiography that as a young man he alienated people by the dogmatism of his opinions. He learned that people liked him better and accepted his ideas more easily if he prefaced his opinions with some modest disclaimer--"Perhaps I have been misinformed, but . . ." "Have I erred in thinking that . . . ," etc. We need not belabor the obvious by detailing the ego value of these ploys.

Not so socially acceptable is chronic poor-mouthing of oneself. The type of self-deprecation which is easily seen through as a device for eliciting a reassuring and ego-bolstering denial from the hearers poses no challenge to our

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theory. However there is a type of self-deprecation that actually carries conviction--the speaker is sincerely lamenting his lack of this or that good quality. If, as our theory states, we are always trying to build up our self-esteem, how can we explain this behavior which seems to be tearing down the individual's self-esteem?

We all indulge in this sort of self-reviling to some extent. We mentally "kick ourselves" at the remembrance of some past stupid behavior of which we were guilty. The man who could have bought Xerox when it first came out has difficulty forgiving himself for muffing the opportunity. The memory of a particularly humiliating social gaffe or moral lapse can wring from us the self-reproach "What a fool!" Even such a minor self-esteem loss as a missed shot in tennis may bring self-excoriations "you clumsy boob," "you complete idiot." Billie Jean King can sometimes be heard sharply reproving herself after a bad shot in a tennis match, a habit which makes her even more human and endearing to the fans.

But this foible ceases to be endearing in those persons in whom it has become an habitual life style. The individual who is constantly reproving himself and running himself down embarrasses us, makes us feel uneasy. Freud mentions this habit as a characteristic of the melancholic:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the

> self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings. . . .[1]
>
> Now the melancholic displays something else which is lacking in grief--an extraordinary fall in his self-esteem, an improverishment of his ego on a grand scale.[2]
>
> He [the melancholic] has lost his self-respect and must have some good reason for having done so.[3]

Though he does not stress the point, Freud obviously sees self-revilings as the outcry of a wounded self-esteem.

When this self-reviling becomes bitter and habitual we refer to it as self-hatred. But, ironically, self-hatred is a sign of self-love. What is occurring in self-hatred is the total-self denouncing an aspect, or several aspects, of the self. A person who finds his usual social conduct to be painfully awkward, clumsy, and humiliating will come to hate that aspect of himself. He hates it because it reflects unfavorably on the total self. It is only because he loves his total self that he hates the "awkward social behavior in a group" aspect of himself. If he did not love his total self he would be quite indifferent as to whether his social behavior in a group was polished or clumsy. The hatred of self can extend to manifold aspects of self--moral behavior, appearance, intellect, talents--but even the person who is so far sunk into self-hatred as to proclaim "there is nothing good about myself, nothing that I like" (if such be possible), still loves himself. Love is basically two-fold: a desire

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, in General Selections, p. 125.

[2]Ibid., p. 127. [3]Ibid., p. 129.

for an awareness of good possessed, and a complacency in good possessed. (We are talking now about self-love.) The first type corresponds to the sentiment "I want to be great," and the second to the sentiment "I am great." Our extreme self-hater has none of the second type of love, no complacency in good possessed, because he laments that he possesses no good. But he still is consumed with the first type of self-love, that is, a desire to possess good. It is this type of self-love which is the motivating force behind his self-hatred of his negative aspects. The greater the self-love, the greater the simultaneous self-hatred of those characteristics which reflect unfavorably on the total self.

Thus, self-revilings are the spontaneous outpourings of a wounded self-love, of a lacerated self-esteem. But beyond this, do self-revilings have any assuaging value for the self-esteem? Is there any ego pay-off to self-reviling? Adler suggests that there is:

> Prominent among the forms of neurotic behavior which safeguard the superiority fiction are cursing oneself, reproaching oneself, self-torture, and suicide. This may seem strange, until we realize that the whole arrangement of the neurosis follows the trait of self-torture, that the neurosis is a self-torturing device for the purpose of enhancing the self and depreciating the immediate environment. And indeed the first stirrings of the aggression drive directed against one's own person originate from a situation in which the child wants to hurt the parents or wants to attract their attention more effectively.[1]

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[1]Alfred Adler, The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler, ed. by Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), p. 271.

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In Adler's analysis then, the self-reviling in childhood had the self-esteem pay-off of attracting attention, and hopefully the soothing ministrations, of parents, and secondly, of inflicting pain on the parents. Being able to inflict pain on others gives us a corresponding feeling of superiority. The carry-over of the habit of self-reproach into adult life is no doubt motivated by a hope of a similar self-esteem pay-off from (and against) significant others.

Also, there is the lightening rod value of self-criticism in forestalling criticism from others. This too may have been learned in childhood: "Now father, don't be too hard on the poor child. Can't you see he realizes he has done wrong. He is suffering enough already." Even in adult life a self-administered reproach may silence reproaches from others, at least temporarily.

Karen Horney suggests that self-recriminations have two further ego values: they enable the individual to avoid facing his real deficiencies, and they give him leverage to think himself better than others because of his self-honesty.

> With a certainty approximating that of a real instinct his neurotic self-recriminations avoid what are actually the weak points. In fact their very function is to prevent him from facing any real deficiencies. They are a perfunctory concession to the existing goals, a mere means of reassurance that he is not so bad after all and that his very qualms of conscience make him better than others. They are a face-saving device. . . .[1]

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[1]Karen Horney, New Ways in Psychoanalysis (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1966), p. 245.

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In summary, we see that self-reviling is the anguished outcry of a self-esteem wounded by realization of the deficiencies of self, and may offer balm to that wounded self-esteem in several ways: wringing some comforting gestures from the hearers, forestalling their criticism, inflicting pain upon others, making self the center of the stage,[1] evading a confrontation with more serious deficiencies, and providing a feeling of noble self-honesty. No doubt this list could be considerably expanded by further analysis.

Resistance to Self-Esteem Increase

Another phenomenon that calls for explanation is the behavior of the person who seems to be making no efforts to raise his self-esteem, but on the contrary resists attempts by his friends and psychiatrist (if he is being treated) to give him greater ego-strength. It is as though subconsciously he preferred to remain in a state which he consciously laments. It is not that he is eager to lose self-esteem--he does not violate our theory to that extent--but he does seem motivated by a desire to cling to his present level of self-esteem and resists attempts to improve his self-image. Freud observed some such types among his patients:

> There are certain people who behave in a quite peculiar fashion during the work of analysis. When one speaks hopefully to them or expresses satisfaction with the progress of the treatment, they show signs of discontent and their condition invariably becomes worse. . . . One

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[1] La Rochefoucauld says "We would rather speak ill of ourselves than not be spoken of at all."

> becomes convinced, not only that such people cannot endure any praise or appreciation, but that they react inversely to the progress of the treatment. . . . There is no doubt that there is something in these people that sets itself against their recovery and dreads its approach as though it were a danger. . . .[1]

Freud concludes that a part of such resistance is due to the patient's desire to prove himself superior to the psychiatrist, and to "the various kinds of advantages which the patient derives from the illness," but that a more powerful motivation is an unconscious feeling of guilt on the part of the patient, which is finding atonement in the suffering caused by the illness. Freud adds that it is extremely difficult to convince the patient that this is his motivation in clinging to his illness.[2] Let us see what self-esteem values we can find for the patient in the explanation offered by Freud. First and most obvious is the gratification of a feeling of superiority in resisting the doctor. Among the "various kinds of advantages" might be excusal from activities which have been a source of humiliation for the patient. As for the guilt aspect, what is guilt but an apprehension of future loss (the word punishment is too limiting, implying unnecessarily as it does the concept of an intelligent agent

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[1] Freud, The Ego and the Id, General Selections, p. 228.

[2] Freud then expresses an insight which has far-reaching implications and which we will discuss more fully in the section on Neurosis and Self-Esteem. He says: "In fact it may be precisely this element in the situation, the attitude of the ego-ideal [condemning the ego for not living up to the ego-ideal], that determines the severity of a neurotic illness." As we will see, he is saying in effect that neurosis is basically a self-esteem problem.

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administering the punishment) because of some past blameworthy action (or present blameworthy attitude) on the part of the guilty one. Therefore, by embracing his present illness as his punishment, the person hopes, implicitly, to avoid a greater loss in the future. Thus, his clinging to his illness is, he subconsciously hopes, going to mean a more favorable self-esteem balance in the long-run.

Without challenging the validity of Freud's explanation, we wish to offer an additional explanation for the patient's adverse reaction to praise on his progress, and for his apparent desire to remain in his present low-esteem (tension between ego and ego-ideal) condition. The explanatory principle is this: it is more tolerable to retain a low level of self-esteem than to raise one's self-esteem and then crash back to the same low level. This principle of course is not limited to neurotics; it applies to all of us. We all learn by experience to be wary of inflating our self-esteem too much beyond what reality will support, lest somehow an unavoidable confrontation with reality will be forced upon us, with resultant sharp loss of self-esteem. This end result is more painful than is a realistic, if reluctant, acceptance of our former low level of self-esteem. Thus I hesitate to embrace the delightful and beckoning self-image of being a polished, suave, debonair, charming Beau Brummel, oozing eclat, panache, savoir faire, and whatever. Experience teaches me to draw back from such a self-image, appealing though it is, because it would make subsequent confrontation

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with reality doubly painful. This is the reality principle in operation. It is an application of William James' useful formula, Self-Esteem = $\frac{\text{Success}}{\text{Pretensions}}$, or, in other words, Self-Esteem = $\frac{\text{actual self-image}}{\text{ideal self-image}}$. The higher I exalt my pretensions, or ideal self-image, the lower will be my self-esteem when reality forces me to face the gap between actual and ideal self-image.

The folklore of the centuries is replete with this wisdom, if such an elemental and automatic ego-defense can be called wisdom. Aesop's Fables, which have expressed and inculcated folk-wisdom for almost three thousand years, tell us of the jay who tucked some peacock feathers under his wings and strutted about, only to receive a severe pecking from the peacocks for his effrontery; and of the frog who puffed himself up and up, mightily impressing the other frogs, until suddenly he burst. The legends of ancient Greece and Rome are insistent that nemesis follows hubris, disaster follows too-high aspirations. Prometheus has his liver eaten out every day by a vulture, for 30,000 years, the liver growing back each night, as punishment for stealing fire from the gods. For defying the gods, among his other offenses, Sisyphus in Hades strains to roll a huge stone to the top of a hill, whereupon it rolls back down and he has to repeat the performance. Icarus, exulting in his wings of feathers and wax, flew higher and higher until the sun melted the wax and he fell to his death in the sea. His father, Daedalus, flying at a lower altitude, safely made

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the journey to freedom. Pride goes before a fall. Not an altogether appealing maxim, but one that we all instinctively operate on, realizing that to "get out of our depth," or in this case, to get above our proper altitude, can be disastrous to our self-esteem. We don't want to get up where the sun will melt the wax on our wings. Or to put it in modern terms, we don't want to get to an altitude where our wings will ice over and cause us to crash.

The patients whom Freud observed becoming uneasy when he praised their progress were perhaps instinctively resisting being built up to a point where subsequent relapse would be all the more crushing. Were their resistance vocalized, or even explicitly formed in their own minds, it might run: "thanks a heap, you son of a bitch. You are just trying to get me up there where my wings will ice over and I'll crash, much to the secret gratification of one and all. Thanks, but no thanks." We all operate on this same principle; we differ in the altitude at which our wings ice over. Freud's resisting patients had found that their critical altitude was three feet off the ground.

This same theme is developed by Seymour Epstein in his article "The Self-Concept Revisited." As an alternative to Freud's involved explanation of the self-reviling noticed in the melancholic person, Epstein offers another explanation:

> I would like to suggest a simpler one, which rests on the assumption that a sudden drop in self-esteem is more distressing than a chronically low level of self-esteem. If this is true, then individuals who anticipate that their self-esteem will be lowered by others will tend to chronically devalue themselves in order to prevent a

> greater discomfort. . . . Further, by retaining his self-evaluation at a low level, he is saved from concern over the greater pain of having it further lowered. This can account for why depressed people resist efforts to increase their self-esteem.
>
> . . . One tendency is for the individual to wish to raise his self-esteem, as high self-esteem feels good. The other is for the individual to wish to avoid a drop in self-esteem, as a drop in self-esteem feels particularly bad. Accordingly, the individual avoids evaluating himself unrealistically highly, as this would expose him to decreases in self-esteem.[1]

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

An alternative explanation is sometimes offered for our occasional resistance to a too-sudden or too-high increase of self-esteem, an explanation based on Festinger's "cognitive dissonance" theory. In 1957 Leon Festinger published A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance, which, in its simplest terms, states that we are reluctant to accept "knowledge, opinions, or beliefs" which do not harmonize with our present knowledge, opinions or beliefs. Festinger and others have applied this theory with some success in predicting behavior in certain social situations.

As applied to the resistance occasionally offered by Freud's patients to praise and encouragement, this theory might explain that the words of praise created dissonance with the patient's low self-image, and were therefore rejected. The same explanation applies to the normal person's resistance to a too-high or too-sudden increase of self-esteem.

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[1]Seymour Epstein, "The Self-Concept Revisited," The American Psychologist (May 1973), p. 415.

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Certainly there is a wide area in which the cognitive dissonance theory is valid, but we suggest that those cases can be explained more basically by the self-esteem theory. We are indeed reluctant to accept cognitions which are dissonant with any cognitions we now have which enhance our self-image. No one wants to be put down. And we are reluctant to accept cognitions which are dissonant to even our present cognitions which are in themselves neutral in self-image content, e.g., the Panama Canal is due south of New York City, for the simple reason that the dissonant cognition is telling us "you are wrong," which is a threat to our self-esteem, slight or great, depending on the importance of the matter. And we may be reluctant to accept cognitions which elevate our self-esteem considerably, for the "don't ice my wings" reasons we have elaborated in the preceding pages. The mother who is informed that her MIA son is alive and well may hesitate a moment to accept the news--"I was afraid of getting my hopes up"--for fear that the news would turn out to be false.

But cognitive dissonant information which moderately increases our self-esteem we are eager to accept. The student who thought that he got a C in the course is delighted to hear from the professor that his grade was a B. The person who has a self-image of being unlucky is happy with the dissonant information that he has won the office pool on the Super Bowl.

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In short, we resist accepting cognitions which threaten our self-esteem. They may do this a) by telling us we do not possess a good we think we possess, b) by telling us that we are wrong in a "neutral" opinion, and c) by offering to raise our self-esteem to a point where it is in danger of a clash with reality. We eagerly accept dissonant cognitions which reasonably increase our self-esteem.

Humility

When we picture the human being as motivated almost entirely (sense pleasure plays a relatively minor role) by a desire to increase self-esteem, it seems that we have ruled out the attitude known as humility. What is humility actually? We find almost as many definitions as definers. We propose that humility might fairly be called an acceptance of the truth about ourselves. Or equivalently, humility is an accurate awareness, and acceptance of that awareness, of the good possessed by self. This accurate awareness of good possessed by self would of course also mean an accurate awareness of the lack of good possessed, i.e., of one's faults and deficiencies. It seems we must include the word acceptance. Otherwise we would be including in our definition the person who realizes all his deficiencies but bitterly resents that realization. Such a situation would not square with our usual conception of the humble person as being contented, peaceful and accepting.

If humility then is an accurate awareness and acceptance of the good (and lack of good) possessed by self, can

this be harmonized with man's desire for an awareness of good possessed by self, i.e., desire for self-esteem? The apparent jarring element is the acceptance of personal deficiencies. But does humility involve an acceptance of personal deficiencies or only an acceptance of the awareness of personal deficiencies? It seems, the latter. Because we picture the truly humble person as honestly and tranquilly facing up to his deficiencies but at the same time working to overcome them, or at least to overcome such of them as he considers significant.

Still, how can a human being, whom we have presented as being avid for awareness of good possessed by self, tranquilly accept an awareness of his lack of good. It seems a contradiction in terms.

Certainly it is a psychic task of the utmost difficulty. The only thing that makes it possible is a bone-deep conviction that increased self-esteem in the long run depends on ruthless devotion to the reality principle here and now.

We all have found that facing reality in its more imperious and obvious aspects is a policy vital to the enhancement of self-esteem. The truly humble person only carries that discovery to its logical conclusion. He faces reality in all its subtle, difficult-to-discover, and humiliating aspects, and accepts it, secure in the confidence that this is the royal road to greater self-esteem.

But have we not here run into another contradiction--the humble person seeking great self-esteem. Ridiculous.

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Another clash of concepts. It would indeed be a clash of concepts if we define the humble man as accepting his deficiencies. But actually he does not accept his deficiencies, only the awareness of his deficiencies. Meanwhile, he is striving to eliminate those deficiencies. This he does by acquiring more good, and concomitantly, awareness of good possessed, i.e., self-esteem. Finally, we come to the conclusion that the humble person is the one most secure and effective in his search for self-esteem, in that he is most faithful to the reality principle. Any flaunting of reality, in even its most subtle aspects, in building our self-esteem, will prove to be a ticking time bomb, exploding when we come to the moment of truth.

Summary of Chapter III

We derive self-esteem from any awareness of good possessed by self. "Good" is anything that the individual considers desirable. The awareness may be valid or it may be a self-deception. The possession may be actual or potential, as in hope. The self may be one's identical self, or it may include those "extended selves," that is, the persons with whom one identifies. We may become aware of our possession of good from the testimony of others (their love, esteem, friendship, acceptance, etc., tells us "we see desirable qualities in you"), or from direct knowledge of our own achievements, qualities, possessions, etc., independent of the testimony of others.

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Many thinkers have come to the conclusion that the most powerful motive in our lives is our desire for approval from others. Others have realized that this motive, powerful though it is, is subsidiary to the desire for self-approval. We want approval from others in order to bolster our self-esteem.

Our desire for self-esteem is insatiable, but we early learn that to exalt our self-esteem in defiance of the more obvious aspects of reality is counter-productive. This fact we term the reality principle. Thus, reality exerts a constant check upon our drive for self-exaltation.

However, so imperious is our desire for an exalted self-image that we seek in a multitude of ingenious and subconscious ways to deny and distort reality in our favor. Freud's ego-defense mechanisms are part of this psychic enterprise. Astute observers down through the centuries have commented on man's indefatigable genius for self-deception.

Apparent exceptions to this universal tendency to self-exaltation are the persons who are constantly depreciating themselves, both to others and to self, the persons who resist attempts by well-wishers to raise their self-esteem, and those persons who practice what can be called genuine humility. The self-revilings of the first type are the outcry of a lacerated self-esteem. Also, his self-deprecation has ego pay-offs. Among them: it may attract attention and sympathy; it may inflict pain upon others close to the complainer, thus enhancing his feeling of power over others; it

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may help the individual to avoid facing his more basic and unrecognized deficiencies; it may provide the individual with a feeling of noble self-honesty, etc.

The person who resists attempts by others to raise his self-esteem is operating subconsciously on the principle that it is more tolerable to retain a low self-esteem than to raise one's self-esteem and then crash back to the former level. He has learned from experience the safe operating level of self-esteem for himself, and hesitates to rise above this lest confrontation with reality bring a sharp drop in self-esteem. The sharp drop is more painful than the constant low level.

The truly humble person is the one who is most fully in touch with reality. He, like all the rest of us, wants the highest level of self-esteem possible, but he recognizes that this can only be achieved by a ruthlessly honest facing-up to reality, one element of which is a recognition of his manifold deficiencies.

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CHAPTER IV

COMMON HUMAN GOALS REDUCIBLE TO SELF-ESTEEM OR SENSE PLEASURE: MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Maslow's Theory

The purpose of this chapter is twofold: to discover whether self-esteem and sense pleasure are at the root of the broad goals commonly assumed to motivate mankind, and concurrently to discover whether self-esteem and sense pleasure are the least common denominator in the hierarchy of five levels of motivation proposed by the popular and influential Maslovian theory. Accomplishing the first objective posed the problem: what are the few broad goals that most obviously sum up what human beings seek? To paint the motivational picture in its boldest colors, how many and what colors shall we use? I might offer the motivations that seem to me most obvious and pervasive: physical pleasure, possessions, power, social approval, success, health, and self-approval.[1] To start with such a self-defined list however, and then go on to show that such motivations can

[1]Security, which finds a place in many lists, seems redundant. What is security but a relatively inalienable possession of some other good, already named, whether it be financial security, emotional security, physical security, security in love relationships, etc.

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be reduced to sense pleasure and self-esteem would be open to the criticism that a self-devised test is sometimes too lenient. The alternative is to take a well-accepted list of general motivations and discover to what extent they can be explained in terms of sense pleasure and self-esteem.

The compendium of motivations proposed by Abraham Maslow has the advantage for our purpose that it is composed of a broad spectrum of motivations which speak immediately to the experience of the average man. First we will present Maslow's theory in its broad outlines and then discover whether the several motivations he proposes are in fact expressions of our desires for sense pleasure and for self-esteem.

Abraham Maslow (d. 1970) belongs to the school of "humanistic psychology," a "third force" distinguished from Freudian and behavioristic psychology. He believes that the Freudian concept of man, derived from a study of neurotics, is consequently too negative and limited. The Skinnerian concept of man, based to a large extent on work with rats and pigeons, Maslow finds to be too limited and mechanistic. Maslow hit upon the idea of building a psychology upon the study of normal and superior human beings, a psychology of the healthy human being rather than a psychology of the neurotic. Rather than cure of sickness, Maslow emphasizes growth, development of one's fullest potential. Consistent with this is Maslow's belief that the individual is the architect of his own development--he has freedom of choice, rather than being mechanistically determined either

by his instincts and childhood history, or by reinforcing and aversive stimuli. But he points out that he is not anti-behavioristic, not anti-psychoanalytic, and not anti-Freudian. He proclaims "I am Freudian and I am behavioristic and I am humanistic." By this he means that his philosophy of psychology transcends and embraces the behavioristic and psychoanalytic and humanistic schools without being limited by any of them.

Maslow's purpose was to develop a theory of psychology that would help men to realize their full potential as human beings. To do this it was necessary to wrestle with such philosophical questions as "what is a good human being?, what is good conduct, and what is bad?, what is healthy behavior and what is sick behavior?" Thus the problem was largely one of developing a normative code of ethics, a scientific code that did not rest on religion or opinion but could be arrived at empirically and verified empirically. Previous value systems, including all religions, have obviously failed because "we have as many scoundrels in the world today as we ever had, and many more neurotics." In defence of this bold ambition to establish a value system for the human race through scientific means he says "the ultimate disease of our time is valuelessness . . . this state is more crucially dangerous than ever before in history . . . and something can be done about it by man's own

rational efforts."[1]

Of his methodology in this search for a code of values for human conduct he says "It is my personally chosen task to speculate freely, to theorize, to play hunches, intuitions and in general to try to extrapolate into the future." Such a pioneer has to be a "kind of gambler who comes to tentative conclusions in the absence of facts and then spends some years trying to find out if his hunch was correct."[2]

Ultimately Maslow's methodology resolves itself into a study of individuals who are outstandingly healthy, fulfilled, truly human, in an effort to determine what is the common denominator of behavior and values among such people. Combined with this is a study of "peak experiences," that is, human experiences in which the individual feels most fully alive, happy, fulfilled, in order to discover any common theme of attitudes or values associated with the peak experiences.

Maslow was a student of Kurt Goldstein and was strongly influenced by him. Maslow sums up many of the influences in shaping his thinking in the "Acknowledgments" section of the second edition of Toward a Psychology of Being: "I dedicated this book to Kurt Goldstein originally for all sorts

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[1]Abraham H. Maslow, ed., New Knowledge in Human Values (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1970), p. vii.

[2]Abraham H. Maslow, "Toward a Humanistic Biology," The American Psychologist 24 (August 1969):724.

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of reasons. I would now like to express my indebtedness also to Freud and all the theories he spawned and the counter-theories that they spawned. If I had to express in a single sentence what Humanistic Psychology has meant for me, I would say that it is an integration of Goldstein (and Gestalt Psychology) with Freud (and the various psychodynamic psychologies), the whole joined with the scientific spirit that I was taught by my teachers at the University of Wisconsin."

Core of Maslow's Theory

Maslow's basic credo is that each of us has an intrinsic inner nature, in part unique to the individual and in part common with all men. It is this part which is common to all men which is to be the basis for his scientific ethics. This inner nature is in a certain limited sense unchanging. The qualification "in a certain limited sense" assumes less and less significance as Maslow develops his theory, applying its conclusions to "all men at all times." This inner nature is good or "at least neutral." The "at least neutral" qualification drops out of the picture, yielding to the conclusion that the guide for goodness in human relations is this inner nature. To determine what sort of behavior and attitudes will lead us to our fullest and richest development as human beings we must discover just what is this inner nature we have, and then act in full accordance with it. Thus, "good" is acting in accord with our inner nature and evil is repressing or twisting it. This task of discovery

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is rendered difficult by the fact that our inner nature is not strong and overpowering and unmistakeable like the instincts of animals, but is weak and delicate and easily twisted or repressed by bad habits, erroneous ideologies, unnatural social conventions. There is no instinct for aggression and cruelty in our inner nature, rather, all anti-social tendencies arise in reaction to frustration of our inner nature and its needs. Psychopathology is similarly a result of repression and frustration of our inner nature.

The inner nature common to all men expresses itself in universal needs and desires. Maslow has organized these into a five-level hierarchy. Most basic are physiological needs, then safety needs, belongingness and love needs, esteem needs, and highest, the need for self-actualization. Only when the more basic needs (prepotent needs) are relatively satisfied does the individual become concerned with needs in the next higher level of the hierarchy.

> But what happens to man's desires when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is chronically filled? At once other (and higher) needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still higher) needs emerge, and so on. This is what we mean by saying that the basic human needs are organized into a hierarchy of relative prepotency.[1]

Until the needs at a basic level are "chronically" satisfied, the individual is totally dominated by these needs and is unconcerned about needs at a higher level.

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[1]Abraham H. Maslow, Motivation and Personality (New York: Harper and Row, 1954), p. 83.

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Physiological needs

Maslow includes in this group hunger, thirst, sex, desire for oxygen, for sleep, and the "various sensory pleasures (tastes, smells, tickling, stroking)." However:

> . . . it seems impossible as well as useless to make any list of fundamental physiological needs, for they can come to almost any number one might wish, depending on the degree of specification of description.[1]

Worthy of note is Maslow's recognition that these physiological drives sometimes serve as means of fulfilling other desires:

> It should be pointed out again that any of the physiological needs and the consummatory behavior involved with them serve as channels for all sorts of other needs as well. That is to say, the person who thinks he is hungry may actually be seeking more for comfort, or dependence, than for vitamins or proteins.[2]

Safety needs

By safety needs Maslow means safety from threats to life, to health, liberty, physical integrity, financial security, and to psychological well-being. The person who is operating on this level of motivation is characterized by a fear-dominated orientation toward life.

Belongingness and love needs

When physiological and safety needs are relatively satisfied, then love and belongingness needs assert themselves. Now the individual is primarily concerned with a need for a place in the group, a need for acceptance,

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[1]Ibid., p. 81. [2]Ibid.

affection and close relations with friends, family, loved ones. "He will want to attain such a place more than anything else in the world, and may even forget that once, when he was hungry, he sneered at love as unreal or unnecessary or unimportant."[1] The individual's sexual behavior is an expression of both physiological needs and these belongingness and love needs. Maslow adds that both receiving and giving love are a part of the love needs.

The esteem needs

> All people in our society (with a few pathological exceptions)[2] have a need or desire for a stable, firmly based, usually high evaluation of themselves, for self-respect, or self-esteem, and for the esteem of others.[3]

Maslow classifies the esteem needs into two groups: one group depends upon the attitude that others have toward us--reputation, prestige, status, appreciation, importance, attention, etc., and the other group depends upon our own characteristics, more or less independent of what others may

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[1]Ibid., p. 89.

[2]By pathological exceptions Maslow probably means those individuals who seem to be afflicted with self-hatred. However, as we have seen in the section on Self-deprecation and Self-hatred, these people also desire to have as high a self-esteem as is possible under their subjective circumstances. Their self-hatred is directed at some aspect of themselves which is wounding their total self-esteem, and their reluctance to embrace a higher opinion of themselves is motivated largely by the fact that any such elevation followed by a relapse is more painful to the self-esteem than is a stable condtion of low self-esteem.

[3]Ibid., p. 90.

think of us--strength, achievement, adequacy, competence, confidence, independence, freedom. The esteem needs "have been relatively stressed by Alfred Adler and his followers, and have been relatively neglected by Freud. More and more today, however, there is appearing widespread appreciation of their central importance, among psychoanalysts as well as among clinical psychologists."[1]

The need for self-actualization

By self-actualization Maslow means development of one's fullest potential. As we have seen, he believes that each individual has a unique inner nature, in addition to common human nature, and our highest vocation is to get in touch with that unique individual nature and live it to the fullest. So doing we develop our talents and potentialities to the highest degree and achieve true self-fulfillment, self-realization, self-actualization. How this is accomplished varies from individual to individual. One person may develop his abilities as a writer, another as a surgeon, still another as a mother whose concern and insight is able to bring out the best in her children. Conjointly with developing such talents, these self-actualizing persons are making every effort, successfully, to grow as loving, concerned, expanded human beings.

One can develop into a self-actualizing person, according to Maslow, only after the four more basic levels of

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[1]Ibid.

motivation are fairly well satisfied. From "countless clinical experiences" with self-actualizing people Maslow has arrived at the following characteristics of the self-actualizing person:

1. Clearer, more efficient perception of reality
2. More openness to experience
3. Increased integration, wholeness, and unity of the person
4. Increased spontaneity, expressiveness; full functioning; aliveness
5. A real self; a firm identity; autonomy, uniqueness
6. Increased objectivity, detachment, transcendence of self
7. Recovery of creativeness
8. Ability to fuse concreteness and abstractness
9. Democratic character structure
10. Ability to love, etc.[1]

Scanning four hundred years of history, Maslow has selected a group of fully self-actualizing persons. If any liberal humanist were to select a group of historical "greats" of the modern Western world it would probably closely correspond to Maslow's group--Jefferson, Lincoln, Einstein, Schweitzer, Eleanor Roosevelt, Spinoza, Aldous Huxley, Jane Addams, William James, etc.[2] Maslow is not sanguine about the percentage of people who become self-actualizing--"perhaps one

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[1]Abraham H. Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, 2nd ed. (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., 1968), p. 157.

[2]Frank Goble, The Third Force (New York: Pocket Books, 1970), p. 25.

in one hundred or two hundred."

The four more basic levels of motivation Maslow refers to as D-needs, D standing for deficiency. Self-actualization is a B-need, a Being need, as opposed to the other four, which are becoming needs. The four lower needs are the means--becoming, while self-actualization is the end, the ultimate state of being which is desired.

To clear up possible misunderstandings, Maslow offers some qualifications of his schema. He does not intend his hierarchy of motivations as a rigid system. There are numerous exceptions, persons for whom a particular higher value is more prepotent (has a greater immediate priority) than is some more basic value. He gives the example of persons for whom self-esteem is more prepotent than is the belongingness need. Also, in any particular case of human behavior, several levels of motivation may be operating at the same time. To clear up the false impression that a more prepotent need must be 100 percent satisfied before the next higher level need is felt, Maslow explains:

> In actual fact, most members of our society who are normal are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially unsatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time. A more realistic description of the hierarchy would be in terms of decreasing percentages of satisfaction as we go up the hierarchy of prepotency. For instance, if I may assign arbitrary figures for the sake of illustration, it is as if the average citizen is satisfied perhaps 85 percent in his physiological needs, 70 percent in his safety needs, 50 percent in his love needs, 40 percent in his self-esteem needs, and 10 percent in his self-actualization needs.
>
> As for the concept of emergence of a new need after satisfaction of the prepotent need, this emergence is not

> a sudden saltatory phenomenon, but rather a gradual emergence by slow degrees from nothingness. For instance, if prepotent need A is satisfied only 10 percent, then need B may not be visible at all. However, as this need A becomes satisfied 25 percent, need B may emerge 5 percent, as need A becomes satisfied 75 percent, need B may emerge 50 percent, and so on.[1]

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in Terms of Self-Esteem and Sense Pleasure

Maslow's physiological needs seem generally equivalent to sense pleasure motivations. Hunger, thirst, and the physical aspect of sex are basically matters of sense gratification. Sleep is similarly a physically pleasant activity, at least in the conscious moments of settling down for a good night's rest. Of course, this is not to say that "nature's purpose," if we may be permitted that controversial expression, for eating, drinking, sex and sleep is to give us sense pleasure. Rather, the accompanying sense pleasure is what basically motivates us to engage in these activities. As the same time, there may be self-esteem considerations involved in these activities, as we have previously noted--sex contributes to our estimation of our lovability (plus a host of other self-esteem considerations), eating and drinking can give us a glow of feeling competent at having provided thus well for ourselves, and can serve as confirmation of our discriminating taste, etc. Also a motivational factor is the realization that such activities are necessary for our continued physical well-being. This in turn we

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[1]Abraham Maslow, Motivation and Personality, p. 100.

desire for its sense pleasure benefits and for self-image enhancement.

Safety needs do not introduce any new element into the picture. Safety simply means relative freedom from threat of loss of some good we possess. Therefore our desire for safety springs from the same motivation as our desire for the good whose safety is desired. Safety of life is a matter of self-preservation, which we have already seen to be resolvable into considerations of sense pleasure and self-esteem. Safety from physical harm, short of death, may be desired in order to avoid the physical pain of bodily harm, or to avoid the self-esteem loss that loss of physical capacity entails. Security from loss of material possessions is desired for the same reason that we desire the material possessions in the first place. This may be as a means to sense pleasures, and as a source of various other kinds of security, but most importantly, we desire material possessions as prestige symbols. Having money gives you the sweet feeling of being a winner in the game of life, the game that everyone is so eagerly playing, and earns you signs of deference from the other players. This further boosts your self-esteem. Additionally, we desire possessions as a hedge against hunger, cold and pain, all sense pleasure considerations, but again, with self-esteem-reducing connotations.

We want to belong, to be accepted, to receive love and affection, as reassurances of our lovability and worth. This self-esteem root we have traced at length in a previous

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chapter. Maslow also specifies that the love needs include the desire to bestow love on others. This pleasure we feel in loving someone can be traced by several different paths to its unconscious root, the gratifying awareness of excellence possessed by self. The feeling of tenderness and melting merging with the other is an expression of a psychic union between us, and by union with another we implicitly feel that we possess that person and that person possesses us, with his or her excellences becoming ours, and our excellences becoming his or hers. Also, a feeling of love and concern for another makes us stand taller, and feel like better persons, recognizing as we do the excellence of such an attitude or emotion. There is a very gratifying glow in the self-image of being a loving person. Being the possessor of this expansive loving attitude is being the possessor of a considerable excellence. Then too, we implicitly realize that love for another makes us more appealing persons in general--"all the world loves a lover."

Under esteem needs, Maslow includes self-esteem and esteem from others. Once again, the latter desire, as we have shown in a previous chapter, is traceable to our desire for reassurance of our own worth.

Our self-actualization desire, as Maslow presents it, is the desire to fully actualize our potentialities, that is, to possess to the fullest extent those goods of which our nature is capable. Can we say that this too is a desire for an <u>awareness</u> of good possessed by self, i.e., for

self-esteem? Or is the objection valid which says, no, it is a desire to possess a good but that is not equivalent to a desire for an awareness of good possessed by self. Take, as a random example, George Washington Carver, to whom Maslow accords "potential or possible" status as a self-actualizing person. Carver wanted to actualize his full potential as a scientist. This means a desire to possess scientific excellence, but can we say that his desire was directed toward an awareness of possession of scientific excellence? Probably he would not formulate his desire in such terms, and he might protest "What I want is to be the most fully productive scientist that I am capable of being, rather than to be aware of being a fully productive scientist." "And what gives you satisfaction and assurance that you are on the right track, that you are progressing toward your goal?" we ask him. "Evidence, concrete evidence, the practical results of my work," he answers with a quiet and justified pride. "You get pleasure and satisfaction then, from evidence that you are achieving your goal, that is, awareness that you are achieving your goal. Evidence is, by its nature, that which produces a solid awareness." In our scenario, Carver then graciously concedes that he is indeed desirous of awareness, evidence, of fulfilling his potential as a scientist. Progress and great discoveries, without the awareness of progress and great discoveries, and such is possible, give no satisfaction. On the other hand, erroneously imagined progress and discoveries give satisfaction and gratification of

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the self-actualization urge, as long as that illusory awareness persists. It is the awareness, real or illusory, of good possessed, which satisfies desire. Possession of the desired good does not satisfy desire until there is awareness of that possession. Illusory awareness, of course, has the disadvantage, among others, that sooner or later, reality, directly or in its consequences, is apt to force itself into the awareness of the individual.

But another objection can be raised in the case of G. W. Carver, and indeed in the case of any self-actualizing person. Carver might say "My self-actualization as a scientist is not for myself, but for my people. For my people in two ways--first, that my success will serve as an example and inspiration to others, and secondly, that the results of my work may materially benefit my people. Therefore, the ultimate goal of my work is not awareness of good possessed by self, but good to be possessed by my people." Certainly Carver was acting from the noble motive of identification with his people, desiring their welfare. And as we have considered in our chapter on altruism, this desire to benefit people with whom we identify, is a desire to benefit an extended self. The very process of identification is regarding the other as another self, an extension of self--to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the depth of the identification. It is no degradation of Carver or of any other noble self-actualizing person to suggest that to them also apply Aristotle's axiom that in all we do, each one of us is seeking

his own happiness. It was with this insight that Maslow chose the expression "self-actualizing person," rather than "other-actualizing person."

In a passage that shows perfect harmony with Aristotle's adage that "in every action, every agent seeks its own perfection," Maslow says:

> . . . it looks as if there were a single ultimate value for mankind, a far goal toward which all men strive. This is variously called by different authors self-actualization, self-realization, integration, psychological health, individuation, autonomy, creativity, productivity, but they all agree that this amounts to realizing the full potentialities of the person, that is to say, becoming fully human, everything that the person can become.[1]

Maslow mentions that he received considerable criticism for his hierarchy of five needs on the grounds that they were all self-oriented, even in the highest self-actualizing stage.

> This has turned out to be so in spite of my careful efforts to describe the empirical fact that self-actualizing people are altruistic, dedicated, self-transcending, social, etc.[2]

We suggest that Maslow's theory does not malign human nature,because it makes allowances for, indeed encourages, dedication to the welfare of others. When he joins Aristotle, Plato, Freud, Adler, Skinner and a legion of others in proposing motivations that are self-oriented he is in illustrious company and above the charge of cynicism.

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[1]Maslow, New Knowledge in Human Values, p. 123.

[2]Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. vi.

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When Maslow describes self-actualizing people as being altruistic, self-transcending and unselfish, he is using those terms in the common and acceptable sense that the agent is seeking no external reward for his benefactions, and indeed may not be aware of any desire for even an internal reward. However, that the self-actualizing person is indeed seeking the internal reward of self-fulfillment is the whole thrust of Maslow's theory.

Summary of Chapter IV

In summary, the panoply of human desires, as condensed into Maslow's hierarchy of five needs, can be further condensed into two needs: the desire for sense pleasure and the desire for a good self-image. Physiological needs are satisfied by following sense desires; our need for belonging and love is a need for social approval, which is desired as a testimony to our own worth; the same can be said for esteem from others; safety needs are the need for relatively inalienable possession of some good included in the groups just mentioned previously; self-actualization is the desire to acquire good in the form of personal development, or stated in its more immediately operative form, the desire to acquire the awareness of personal development, i.e., maximum self-respect.

CHAPTER V

SELF-LOVE, ALTRUISM, AND SELF-ESTEEM

Introduction

We have portrayed human behavior as motivated entirely by self-oriented desires--sense pleasure and self-esteem. Does this mean that human beings are completely selfish in their motivation? Is self-concern and self-love necessarily selfish? How can such a theory explain the many acts of concern for the welfare of others that we see every day? Heroic acts of self-sacrifice, even to the point of death, surely cannot be explained by man's desire for self-esteem? Is such a noble sentiment as "greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friend" to be comprehended under the rubric of self-esteem? These relationships between self-love and altruism and self-esteem we will consider in this chapter.

Is Self-Love Selfish?

We picture the selfish person as only concerned for his own welfare, greedily grabbing goodies and callous toward the plight of others. "Hurrah for me and ---- you, Jack!" and its variant "I got mine; ---- you, Jack!" a credo heard among American and British soldiers in World War II, is the heraldic motto of the selfish person. Despite Ayn Rand's

best efforts, nothing can be done to re-habilitate the word "selfish"; it always connotes something unpleasant.

Some of this same stigma has rubbed off onto most words that carry the prefix "self." Maslow ran into this difficulty with his term "self-actualization," which he uses to describe man's noblest activities.

> However, besides being clumsy from a literary point of view, this term [self-actualization] has proven to have the unforeseen shortcomings of appearing a) to imply selfishness rather than altruism . . . . This has turned out to be so in spite of my careful efforts to describe the empirical fact that self-actualizing people are altruistic, dedicated, self-transcending, social, etc. . . . The word "self" seems to put people off, and my redefinitions and empirical description are often helpless before the powerful linguistic habit of identifying "self" with selfish. . . .[1]

The term "self-love" has for centuries shared this onus. Self-love has had a popular mystique, or if you prefer, an unpopular mystique, of being equated with selfishness, conceit and sin. Probably a large part of this comes from religious emphasis on love for neighbor as being the ideal, with the corollary that love for self is the antithesis of the ideal. Generations of preachers have condemned self-love as the source of all sin, and as the prime obstacle in the way of love for God and for neighbor, and as the enemy of salvation.[2] Erich Fromm in Man For Himself observes:

> Modern culture is pervaded by a tabu on selfishness.

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[1]Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being, p. vi.

[2]Aquinas speaks for the Catholic tradition in saying that inordinate self-love is the source of all sins, but that self-love per se is natural and good. Luther and Calvin are less inclined to concede any legitimacy to self-love.

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> We are taught that to be selfish is sinful and that to love others is virtuous . . . . the doctrine which declares selfishness to be the arch evil and love for others to be the greatest virtue is still powerful. Selfishness is used here almost synonymously with self-love. The alternative is to love others, which is a virtue, or to love oneself, which is a sin. . . .[1]
>
> The doctrine that selfishness is the arch-evil and that to love oneself excludes loving others is by no means restricted to theology and philosophy, but it became one of the stock ideas promulgated in home, school, motion pictures, books; indeed in all instuments of social suggestion as well.[2]

A strange bed-fellow with theology and philosophy in supporting this animus against self-love is Sigmund Freud, as Fromm points out. Freud makes no direct attack on self-love, but his thought presents self-love as a rival competing against love for others. The psychic organism has a fixed quantity of libido, in Freud's view, which means that any libido cathected toward self (self-love), is not available for cathexis toward an external object (love for others). Self-love and love for others are thus competing for the available energy of the libido; when one flourishes the other diminishes. Fromm spells this out:

> The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with "selfishness" and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud's theory of narcissism. Freud's concept presupposes a fixed amount of libido. In the infant, all of the libido has the child's own person as its objective, the stage of "primary narcissism," as Freud calls it. During the individual's development, the libido is

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[1]Erich Fromm, Man For Himself (New York: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1947), p. 124.

[2]Ibid., p. 131.

> shifting from one's own person toward other objects. If a person is blocked in his "object-relationships," the libido is withdrawn from the objects and returned to his own person; this is called "secondary narcissism." According to Freud, the more love I turn toward the outside world the less love is left for myself, and vice versa. He thus describes the phenomenon of love as an impoverishment of one's self-love because all libido is turned to an object outside oneself.[1]

Joining in the attack on self-love are political systems which demand that the individual submerge his own interests and identity in his devotion to the state, the party, fatherland, cause, etc. Fromm comments:

> The deteriorated meaning of the concept of self-interest which pervades modern society has given rise to attacks on democracy from the various types of totalitarian ideologies. These claim that capitalism is morally wrong because it is governed by the principle of selfishness, and commend the moral superiority of their own systems by pointing to their principle of the unselfish subordination of the individual to the "higher" purposes of the state, the "race," or the "socialist fatherland."[2]

Relevant to the above are recent articles in the Peking Review, authoritative voice of the ideology currently in power in Peking, which condemn Confucius' doctrine of "self-cultivation" as bourgeois and productive of the counter-revolutionary vice of individualism.

But is self-love necessarily the villian in the human psychic drama? Is self-love necessarily opposed to love for others? Fromm concedes that there is a pro-self-love mystique current in today's culture, diametrically opposed to the anti-self-love attitude described above. There are several varieties of the pro-self-love viewpoint. Basic is the

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[1]Ibid., p. 132. [2]Ibid., p. 142.

natural reaction of the man in the street: "If you don't look out for #1, nobody will." This attitude, carried to an extreme and raised to the dignity of a philosophy, was proposed by Nietzsche. He glorified the superman who exults in his drive for power, scorning such qualities as altruism, self-sacrifice, self-denial, brotherly love and humility as the refuge of weaklings who were failures in the power struggle. Ayn Rand and Nathaniel Branden are the latter-day apostles of this creed, with the added concept that a policy of "virtuous selfishness" is most effective in promoting the welfare of everyone. "What's good for General Bullmoose is good for the country."

Not so militant but still pro-self-love is the proposition that one finds with increasing frequency in psychological journals and books: a healthy self-love is the necessary condition for a healthy love for others; a healthy self-esteem correlates positively with esteem for others. Erich Fromm espouses this view. He disagrees with the Freudian concept of love as a reservoir of libido which if given to self must necessarily have less to give to others. Instead he sees love as a unitary attitude toward persons, self being one of these persons. The individual who has a loving attitude embraces self and others in this loving attitude. The person who does not have a loving attitude is unloving not only toward others but in reality toward himself as well.

> We have now come to the basic psychological premises on which the conclusions of our arguments are built. Generally, these premises are as follows: not only others,

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> but we ourselves are the "object" of our feelings and attitudes; the attitudes toward others and toward ourselves, far from being contradictory, are basically conjunctive. With regard to the problem under discussion this means: Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives. On the contrary, an attitude of love toward themselves will be found in all who are capable of loving others. Love, in principle, is indivisible as far as the connection between "objects" and one's own self is concerned.[1]

In his use of the term "love," love for self or for others, Fromm intends care and respect for the person, with an active striving for the growth and happiness of the person. He sees selfishness as totally opposed to self-love. The selfish person, lacking in concern for others, cannot truly respect himself and is not, in the truest sense, striving for the growth and happiness of self. Therefore he does not truly love himself. "Selfishness and self-love, far from being identical, are actually opposites."[2]

Self-love is selfish and evil; or, self-love and selfishness are good, qualities of the strong, authentic man; or, self-love is good and is totally opposed to selfishness--which of these views has most validity? With due humility--thus arousing the scathing scorn of the Nietzsches and Ayn Rands--we will propose our own view, a view that is certainly not original.

We use the word selfish with its usual connotations: the selfish person thinks only of himself and has no concern for others. Bad. Self-love has two aspects: first, desiring good for self; and second, taking pleasure in perceiving

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[1]Ibid., p. 134. [2]Ibid., p. 135.

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self as the possessor of good. Once again, by the term "good" we mean anything that the individual in question regards as desirable. An example of the first aspect of self-love is the desire "I want to be financially independent" (or to marry that girl, or to get a divorce, or to have supper now, or whatever). The second aspect of self-love is expressed by the attitude "I am now financially independent. How sweet it is!" If we must make value judgments, it seems that both these aspects of self-love can be good or bad, depending on circumstances. (The term "good" as used in a value judgment we intend to mean "praiseworthy"; admittedly imprecise but adequate for our purposes.)

According to these definitions, selfishness is self-love without love for others. But of course self-love is not limited to selfishness: the person who in his self-love desires for himself, and realizes, a sincere concern and dedication to the welfare of others, is not selfish. His desire in its roots is self-oriented, but it is totally opposed to selfishness, as that term is commonly understood. Self-love in its first aspect, that of desiring some good for self, is to be praised or deplored according to the good that is desired, and the attendant circumstances. If the object of desire is, let us say, that I (self) discover a cure for cancer, and circumstances make that desire reasonable, then such an other-oriented self-love is to be applauded. Such a desire, although basically self-oriented, is other-oriented in that it contributes to the welfare of others. Self-love

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in its second aspect, that is, a pride in the possession of some good, can also meet with general acclaim or with disapproval depending on the good in which pride is being taken. If I have a quiet pride and self-esteem in my worth as a person, it is called self-respect and meets with approval in the common estimation. If, on the other hand, I take an ostentatious pleasure in my possession of knowledge, this form of self-love merits disapproval. "Nobody likes a smart-ass."

Does this "in some cases self-love is good, in some cases it is bad," sum up the situation? Rather, I prefer the formulation "self-love is basically good; its aberrations are bad." Desiring good for self and taking pleasure in self's possession of good is the irreducible basis of our nature. To say that this is bad is to say that self-preservation is bad, it is to say that thinking, talking, breathing, being itself, is bad. It is self-love that motivates us to eat, to clothe ourselves, to avoid pain and to take whatever other steps are necessary to preserve our health and continued existence. It is self-love that motivates us to increase our knowledge,[1] competence, and general excellence. It is self-love which motivates us to seek the approval of our fellow human beings. All of this is good and proper. Neither individual life nor communal life would be possible without self-love. Is self-love selfish? It is the source of our selfish actions; but it is also the source of our benevolent

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[1]"Knowledge for knowledge's sake" is in reality "knowledge for self-perfection's sake."

behavior, without detracting from the excellence of that behavior, and it is the source of the remainder of our behavior, which does not qualify as either selfish or benevolent.

Even after 2300 years Aristotle's discussion of this point is so pertinent and fresh that we can do no better, in summation, than to quote him at some length:

> People who use self-love as a term of reproach apply the name to those who take more than their share of money, honors, and bodily pleasures; . . . This is characteristic of the majority of men; whence the term 'egoist' has come to be used pejoratively, from the fact that egoism of the ordinary sort is something despicable. . . . if a man were always bent on outdoing others in acting justly or temperately or in a generally virtuous manner, so that what he tried to get for himself was nobility of conduct, surely no one would call him an egoist nor reproach him. And yet such a man evidently possesses self-regard in the highest degree. At least, he takes for himself what is noblest and most truly good, and it is the sovereign part of himself that he gratifies and obeys in everything. . . . And therefore he who loves and gratifies the sovereign element in himself is in the truest sense an egoist. . . . Hence we must regard him as self-loving in the highest degree, although in another sense from that in which we commonly call a man egotistical: . . .
>
> The 'good man' (agathos) therefore ought to be a lover of self, for by doing what is noble he will at once benefit himself and aid his fellows; . . .
>
> The 'virtuous man' (spoudaios), again, does many things for the sake of friends and country, and will even, if need be, lay down his life for them. He will sacrifice money and honors and all the other good things for which men compete, receiving the character of nobility in exchange; . . . Those who die for others apparently attain this result; therein choosing for themselves nobility on a grand scale. . . . And in this sense, as we have said, a man ought to be self-loving; not, however, in the sense in which most men (hoi polloi) are so.[1]

From the one root of self-love, then, spring not only the weeds of selfishness but also the beautiful flowers and

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[1]Aristotle Nichomachean Ethics 9. 8.

fruit of kindness, consideration and love for others. The agent may have many motives for producing this agreeable fruit, not all of them the noblest. Among these motivations, possibly the most irreproachable is consideration of the other as an extended self. This process of identification we will now consider in some detail.

The Principle of Identification

We are all familiar with the feeling of kinship for another human being to the extent that we regard that person as another self, an extended self. This feeling of identification with another person may be a fleeting thing or an enduring thing; it may be deep--"the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David"--or it may be superficial, as a twinge of embarrassment for the man who muffs the punch line of a joke; it may extend to a few persons or it may extend to the whole human race--nihil mihi humanum alienum est. Identification with others is a shifting and relative thing; we identify with our city's winning football team and the town goes wild when we win the Superbowl, but as soon as the team loses three or four games the process of dis-identification begins, reaching almost complete apathy and alienation for the team that has had a few losing seasons. It is no longer "our guys" but "those losers."

We can identify with a person in one aspect and sharply dis-identify with him in another aspect. John and Bill, teenage brothers, have a sharp sibling rivalry that leads them to frequent quarrels. Not much identification evident here. But

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Bill gets into a fist fight with a bigger boy from the next block and John comes to his rescue--"after all, he is my brother." Two black militant groups may engage in internecine warfare but unite as blood brothers against "The Man."

Identification and competition are mutually opposed. The good possessed by the person with whom we identify we regard as to some extent our own good, and we rejoice in his triumphs and successes. The good possessed by a competitor, in the area of competition, we regard as detracting from our own good, and we are not gladdened by his successes. However, we can feel identification and competition toward the same person, but in different situations. Two players competing for one opening on the Davis Cup tennis team feel sharp dis-identification. But once one of them gains a spot, the other roots for him in international competition. At least such is the expected and usual result. A wife identifies with her husband and rejoices in his successes and proudly lets others know about them, but in their private arguments the feeling of identification has been temporarily replaced by the feeling of alienation. Before, his victory was her victory; now his victory is her defeat. Thus we have ambivalent feelings toward our friends and loved ones: to the extent that we identify with them we are happy in their successes; to the extent that we consider them competitors we feel menaced by their successes. Not only are we afraid of their outgrowing us and leaving us, but even apart from that,

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their exaltation is our diminishment. A cynic has said that sweet as it is to hear of your enemy's failure, it is still sweeter to hear of your friend's failure. This Schadenfreude arises when we measure our own status against that of our friend.

As a definition of identification, we tentatively propose the following: identification is a feeling of oneness with another organism, arising from a perceived similarity, and leading us to desire that the other possess good, and to regard the good possessed by the other as a good possessed by self, in a diluted sense.

Now to flesh out some of the terms used in the above defintion. Some of the terms commonly used as synonyms for this feeling of oneness, in its various manifestations, are: fellow feeling, sympathy, empathy, comradeship, camaraderie, friendship, compassion, love. And the basis for this feeling of oneness seems to be a perceived similarity between self and other. This perceived similarity provides a common bond (it need not be a mutual feeling) without which identification is not possible. The perceived similarity may be remote and generic, resulting in a weak sense of identification: a person may see a tree as "a living creature, like myself," or "one of God's creations, like myself" and have some degree of fellow feeling for the tree. Stronger is our feeling for the rabbit hopping across the lawn, or for the horse at the race track that has fallen: "is its leg broken? I hope they won't have to kill it." Why the concern?

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Any money we may have bet on the horse is lost already; we have never seen the animal before and will never see it again, but still we are concerned for its welfare. It is a creature like ourselves in that it can feel pain and suffer.

Our identification with another person may arise from any of a variety of perceived similarities: blood relationship, fellow citizenship, same native language, same race, belong to same organizations, have similar physical appearance, shared experiences, shared attitudes, etc. The more important to us is the quality or attitude we see in ourselves, the deeper the identification with the person we see as sharing that quality or attitude. We feel a deeper kinship with the man who shares our system of ultimate values than we do with a blood brother who has an alien outlook on life. Blood is thicker than water, but shared values are "thicker" than blood. Aristotle tells us that the deepest friendship can only be built upon the common bond of virtue existing in both parties, by which he means that both must have as their ultimate concern a devotion to the search for truth.

By the term "good" in our definition of identification we mean anything that is commonly considered to be desirable--life, freedom, safety, money, pleasure, reputation, etc. Our identification with others leads us to regard the good which they possess as our own, in a diluted sense. We pride ourselves on ancestors that may have achieved distinction; we are only too ready to bring into conversation the names of friends and acquaintances who have some degree of fame or

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success; parents love to retail the accomplishments of their offspring. The lustre of these "other selves," even when the identification is most tenuous and one which the other would disavow, gives added lustre to our own self-image.

William James describes this feeling of triumph in the success of our friends:

> In its widest possible sense, however, a man's Self is the sum total of all that he can call his, not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his house, his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account. All these things give him the same emotions. If they wax and prosper, he feels triumphant; if they dwindle and die away, he feels cast down,--not necessarily in the same degree for each thing, but in much the same way for all.[1]

Not only do we rejoice in the good possessed by those with whom we identify, but as an almost inevitable corollary, we are ready to contribute to their welfare. Depending upon the depth of our identification, we are concerned for the happiness and success of the other, and are prepared to make sacrifices for him. Herein lies the capacity for nobility in human nature. The man whose sincere sense of identification extends to all human beings, regardless of "sex, creed, or color," and regardless of the much more difficult-to-transcend differences in ultimate values, is a man to be admired; the man whose sense of identification with even a few is so deep as to lead him to great sacrifices for their welfare is also to be admired. The man who combines both that ultimate

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[1]William James, The Principles of Psychology, 2 vols. (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd., 1910), 1:291.

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degree of breadth and of depth in his identification with others truly deserves to be called a great man. Perhaps only he merits the title "great."

The good that such a man does to benefit others is not the result of any calculation of advantage that will accrue to himself. Even if it were evident that he would not thereby achieve any prestige, reputation or honor--much less any material advantages--he would still continue to labor for the welfare of others. Realistically however, even in the greatest man thsese personal considerations are probably felt to be an added plus, although they are not the prime motivation. We like to think that such men actually exist, but in any particular case what solid evidence can we offer to persuade the impartial observer that the motivation behind benificent behavior is this deep sense of identification, rather than a more direct and more commonplace desire to live up to the agent's ego-ideal, that is, to enhance self-respect. Sometimes the "great identifier" is counterfeited by a benefactor, who, if candid, might admit to the cliché "I love humanity, it's just people I can't stand." In actual life we should not expect to find "pure types"; even the greatest identifier would probably have a smorgasbord of other motivations in his benefactions.

Many writers have commented upon the principle of identification as a source of our benevolent attitudes and behavior toward others. Freud has a good deal to say about identification. He describes it as an emotional tie with

another, which can arise in two ways: first, as a substitute for a libidinal object-choice, and second, as a result of the perception of a quality in common with the other. The first occurs when a person's libidinous desires toward another are frustrated, either by repression or by loss of the other (cf. Freud's description of the melancholic person in Mourning and Melancholia), and the other is "introjected into the lover's ego," that is, identification is substituted for the libidinous feelings.

> First, identification is the original form of emotional tie with an object; secondly, in a regressive way it becomes a substitute for a libidinal object-tie, as it were by means of introjection of the object into the ego; and thirdly, it may arise with any new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct. The more important this common quality is, the more successful may this partial identification become, and it may thus represent the beginning of a new tie.[1]

Freud sees the phenomenon of identification as leading to benevolent behavior toward others:

> Moreover there is still much to be explained in the manifestations of existing identifications. These result among other things in a person limiting his aggressiveness toward those with whom he has identified himself, and in his sparing them and giving them help. . . .[2]
>
> It is obvious that a soldier takes his superior, that is, in fact, the leader of the army, as his ideal, while he identifies himself with his equals, and derives from this community of their egos the obligations for giving mutual help and for sharing possessions which comradeship implies. . . .[3]
>
> It is otherwise in the Catholic Church. Every Christian loves Christ as his ideal and feels himself united

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1960), p. 49.

[2]Ibid., p. 53.

[3]Ibid., p. 85.

> with all other Christians by the tie of identification. But the Church requires more of him. He has also to identify himself with Christ and love all other Christians as Christ loved them. At both points, therefore, the Church requires that the position of the libido which is given by group formation should be supplemented. Identification has to be added where object-choice has taken place, and object-love where there is identification.[1]

Although Alfred Adler has some disagreements with Freud as to the nature of identification, he agrees that it is the source of our most benevolent actions. He equates identification with empathy, that is, entering into the feelings and thoughts of others.

> We see immediately that this ability coincides in part with what we call identification or empathy . . . . The capacity for identification, which alone makes us capable of friendship, love of mankind, sympathy, occupation, and love, is the basis of social interest and can be practiced and exercised only in conjunction with others.[2]

This recognition that altruistic behavior arises from our sense of identification with others can be found as far back as Aquinas:

> We only love someone insofar as we are one with him.[3]
>
> The love a man has for others arises in man from the love he has for himself.[4]
>
> Doing good to another may give pleasure . . . inasmuch as

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[1]Ibid., p. 86.

[2]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 136.

[3]Thomas Aquinas, Commentary on John, ch. 15, lection VI.

[4]Aquinas, III Contra Gentes, Q. 153, 2.

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> through being united to others by love, we look upon their good as being our own, we take pleasure in the good we do to others, especially our friends, as in our own good.[1]

A contemporary author, Anthony Storr, London psychiatrist, develops this theme more fully:

> Human beings possess the capacity for fraternal feeling towards members of their own group because they are able to recognize others who are close to them as being like themselves, and thus to identify with them. It is on this basis that the interest of the one can be submerged in the interest of the group as a whole; and it is also the capacity for identification which makes self-sacrifice possible. . . .[1]
>
> Men, however, possess the capacity of identification as well as that of projection. They are able to enter into the pain of another, and to imagine what the sufferer feels. Upon this basis of identification with the insulted and injured rests man's charity and altruism: for no one would have been concerned to free slaves or to prevent child-labour unless, imaginatively, he could put himself into the shoes of a slave or an ill-treated child.[2]

We will conclude with a paean of praise for identification as the source of altruistic behavior from Schopenhauer, not otherwise noted for his glowing enthusiasms. He sees identification with another as a partial glimpse of the Hindu and Buddhist monist philosophy to the effect that there is only one reality, and apparent individuation is an illusion:

> The readers of my Ethics know that with me the ultimate foundation of morality is the truth which in the Vedas and the Vedanta receives its expression in the established, mystical formula, Tat twam asi (This is thyself), which is spoken with reference to every living thing, be it man or beast, and is called the Mahavakya, the great word.

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[1]Anthony Storr, Human Aggression (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1968), p. 32.

[2]Ibid., p. 109.

> Actions which proceed in accordance with this principle, such as those of the philanthropist, may indeed be regarded as the beginning of mysticism. Every benefit rendered with a pure intention proclaims that the man who exercises it acts in direct conflict with the world of appearance; for he recognizes himself as identical with another individual, who exists in complete separation from him. . . .
>
> The above mentioned recognition of a man's own true being in another individual objectively presented to him, is exhibited in a particularly beautiful and clear way in the cases in which a man, already destined to death beyond any hope of rescue, gives himself up to the welfare of others with great solicitude and zeal, and tries to save them.[1]

Is identification with others ultimately self-oriented? When we desire good for others with whom we identify, is that desire ultimately self-oriented? It is immediately other-oriented; we have a sincere desire for the welfare of the other. But inasmuch as the process of identification is regarding the other as another self, to a greater or lesser extent, can we not say that the desire for the welfare of the other is, in that sense, a self-oriented desire? This is not to detract from the nobility of that motivation. Identification with others and the resultant interest in their welfare is universally recognized as praiseworthy. We suggest that the breadth and depth of a person's identification with others is the truest measure of his excellence as a person. There is no cynicism or implied degradation of the human race then in Aristotle's dictum that every agent in all its deeds seeks its own perfection. Nor need we feel put down by his equivalent statement "Evidently, then,

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[1]Arthur Schopenhauer, The Essential Schopenhauer (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1962), p. 133.

happiness is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end and aim of all that we do."[1]

Prominent Motivational Systems Are Self-Oriented

As further support for the contention that our benevolence and benevolences are ultimately self-oriented--a conclusion that need not be depressing to those who believe that self-fulfillment and self-actualization are praiseworthy human goals--let us consider the fact that the major modern motivational systems propose motivations that are self-oriented.

It is not our purpose to attempt a judgment as to which psychological systems of motivation are most influential today, but certainly among the contenders are the theories of Freud, Adler and Maslow. The motivations proposed by each of these systems are self-oriented, as we shall consider in some detail. This does not mean that these systems assert that all individuals are selfish. As we have already noted, self-oriented is not to be equated with selfish. Freud, Adler and Maslow all recognize and praise individuals who are kindly, noble, concerned for the welfare of others, and altruistic, in the sense of being ready to make sacrifices for others. Adler and Maslow stress that this attitude is characteristic of the psychologically mature person with social interest (Adler), and his Maslovian equivalent, the self-actualizing B-person. However, this altruism is at

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[1]Aristotle Nichomachean Ethics 1. 7.

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root a matter of self-fulfillment--not always consciously so, of course. Our remarks in this section are certainly no derogation of the systems considered, nor of the altruism which springs from the higher reaches of self-fulfillment.

Freud in his later works maintained that all human behavior springs from two sets of basic instincts, Eros and Thanatos. Eros comprises the life instincts. These are two-fold: ego instincts and sex instincts. The first are concerned with the survival of the individual, and embrace hunger and thirst, as well as the ego's concern for its own welfare. Just what various forms this concern takes is not fully clear in Freud, but one inescapable aspect is the ego's desire to win the approval of the super-ego, that is, the ego's desire to live up to the ego-ideal. The sex instincts include genital sexuality and the desire for pleasure in the other "erogenous" zones. Freud sees man's tenderer emotions toward others as deriving from the sex instinct. A darker side of our nature is represented by Thanatos. This is our ever-operative death wish, inexorably working to bring about the diffusion of all tension within the organism, i.e., to bring about death, but in the way and at the time that the organism unconsciously desires. When this death wish is directed externally it expresses itself as a destructive instinct seeking to do damage to others. Frustrated in external expression, the destructive urge rebounds upon self.

In this system, altruistic behavior is traceable to the sex instinct. In this context, by altruistic behavior

we mean behavior that contributes to the welfare of others, regardless of the agent's motivation. Philip Rieff, author of Freud, The Mind of the Moralist, observes:

> Thus Freud's ideas of sexuality as a general energy of the self may be given another interpretation: that satisfaction from an object is but a devious means of self-love.
>
> Loving, the body is loved, and thus any object is absorbed into the subject; even adult loves retain their autistic and self-regarding character. That love must serve the self or the self will shrink from it, that the self may chase love round an object back to itself again--this is Freud's brilliant and true insight, reminiscent of La Rochefoucauld's keen detection of the ego behind the curtain. To care is the polite form of desire; the man who desires nothing cares for nothing. All loves are unmasked as self-satisfaction: from the love of the child for the parent-provider, to the love of spouses which reincarnates these parent-images, to the parent's "narcissistic" love for his own children. The duplicity of the erotic sentiment is Freud's theme.[1]

When we search in our experience for examples of unselfish love, we usually find the purest examples in a mother's tender love for her children. No dewy-eyed sentimentalist, Freud says of this love:

> If we look at the attitude of fond parents towards their children, we cannot but perceive it as a revival and reproduction of their own, long since abandoned narcissism. Their feeling, as is well known, is characterized by over-estimation, that sure indication of a narcissistic feature in object-choice which we have already appreciated. . . . Parental love, which is so touching and at bottom so childish, is nothing but parental narcissism born again and, transformed though it be into object-love, it reveals its former character infallibly. . . .[2]

If we pose to Freud the question "Do you believe that human beings have an innate urge to be kindly and considerate

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[1]Phillip Rieff, Freud: The Mind of the Moralist (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1961), p. 173.

[2]Freud, On Narcissism, p. 115.

toward fellow human beings?", he gives us the definitive answer:

> The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. Homo homini lupus. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? As a rule this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures. In circumstances that are favorable to it, when the mental counter-forces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien.[1]

Self-Orientation in Adler

To condense the presentation of Adler's psychology which we offered in Chapter II, recall that he pictures the individual as totally concerned with increasing his own sense of superiority. This drive he variously refers to as the drive for superiority, for perfection, for completion, for power, for security, for self-enhancement, for self-esteem, for overcoming, etc.

> Whatever premises all our philosophers and psychologists dream of--self-preservation, pleasure principle, equalization--all these are but vague representations, attempts to express the great upward drive.[2]

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961), p. 58.

[2]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 103.

Yet Adler emphasizes the concept of devotion to the welfare of others, and singles this out as the mark of the mature personality. This is his concept of "social interest." At first sight this "social interest" seems to be an exception to the self-oriented drive for superiority, and indeed a superficial reading of Adler might give the impression that the social interest drive is an independent entity in its own right, not derived from the drive for superiority but existing alongside of it. However, in some passages Adler does make it clear that he considers social interest to be a derivative of the drive for superiority, and its highest expression.

> The continuous striving for security urges toward the overcoming of the present reality in favor of a better one. This goal of perfection must bear within it the goal of an ideal community, because all that we value in life, all that endures and continues to endure, is eternally the product of social interest. . . .[1]
> Whether the highest effective goal is called God or Socialism, or, as we call it, the pure idea of social interest, it always reflects the same ruling, completion-promising, grace-giving goal of over-coming.[2]

Self-Orientation in Maslow

The motivational system proposed by Abraham Maslow is self-oriented, as his terminology itself indicates. He has reduced motivational compoenents into five categories. Most basic and imperious (prepotent) are physiological needs, sometimes referred to as tissue needs--hunger, thirst, sex, sleep, etc. When these needs are relatively well satisfied, the safety needs assert themselves. The individual is

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[1]Ibid., p. 107

[2]Ibid., p. 461.

concerned to render secure his possession of life, limb and property and stable emotional world. Having achieved a fair degree of security, the individual can interest himself in the next higher level of needs, belongingness and love needs. He is eager for a place in the group, and for love and affection. These achieved, he "graduates" to esteem needs. These include self-esteem, whose source is competency, achievement, mastery, independence and freedom, and esteem from others, in the form of reputation, prestige, appreciation, importance, etc. All the needs up to this point, four levels, are referred to as deficiency needs, that is, these deficiencies must be filled before one can begin to flower into a fully developed human being. The very term "need" signifies some good which the organism must acquire for its well being. In other words, these motivations are by their nature self-oriented.

It is true that among the love needs Maslow includes the need to give love. This however does not constitute an other-oriented motivation in the sense that the organism is concerned that others receive love, but is self-oriented in the sense that self needs to be a loving self. The pleasure, self-expansion and self-development involved in loving is the major concern.

The fifth and highest level in Maslow's hierarchy of needs is also self-oriented. The term need once again indicates something that the organism must acquire for itself and for its own welfare. And the special name for this need

is self-actualization, meaning the fulfillment of one's best potentialities. As equivalent terms for self-actualization Maslow has self-realization, psychological health, integration, individuation, autonomy, creativity, etc.[1] All these involve a perfection to be achieved by self.

It is true that Maslow speaks of his self-actualizing people as being altruistic, unselfish, and ego-transcending. Indeed he makes quite a point of this because he has been stung, as he admits, by criticism of the term "self-actualizing" as smacking of selfishness. However, such altruism as he attributes to his ideal people must spring from his five levels of motivation, inasmuch as he has given us no other, and these are self-oriented. Such a meaning of altruism is a common and acceptable one, that is, the individual desires no external reward for his benefactions, but only the internal reward of realizing that he is thereby becoming a better person, i.e., that he is actualizing his potentialities. That Maslow intends this meaning of altruism is hinted at by his frequent modifier "relatively" in front of altruistic or unselfish. Additionally, he speaks of the self-actualizing altruistic people as deriving a pleasure reward from their good deeds:

> Only such people uniformly yearn for what is good for them and for others, and then are able wholeheartedly to enjoy it and approve of it. For such people virtue is its own reward in the sense of being enjoyed in itself. They spontaneously tend to do right because that is what they want to do, what they need to do, what they

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[1] Maslow, New Knowledge in Human Values, p. 123.

enjoy, what they approve of doing, and what they will continue to enjoy.[1]

Of these "relative" altruisms of the self-actualizing people:

> . . . Maslow finds that the psychologically healthy person is both selfish and unselfish; in fact, these two attitudes merge into one. The healthy person finds happiness in helping others. Thus, for him, unselfishness is selfish. "They get selfish pleasures from the pleasures of other people, which is a way of saying unselfish."[2]

To take Maslow's own words that the unselfishness of the self-actualizing person is a source of selfish pleasure for him implies no derogation of Maslow or his system. He has used the words "altruistic" and "unselfish" in a quite acceptable sense. And his presentation of human motivation as being ultimately self-oriented is totally in harmony with most of the great thinkers who have expressed themselves on this subject.

Behaviorism of B. F. Skinner

B. F. Skinner's ideas can scarcely be classified as a theory of motivation. He expresses distaste for the concept of motivations as being something that is not immediately subject to observation as behavior is. His concern is to modify behavior, which he has done with considerable success ("operant conditioning"), and he considers that he has thus by-passed and rendered obsolete any consideration of motives.

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[1]Ibid., p. 129.

[2]Goble, Third Force, p. 29.

However, we are considering him in this section both because of his widespread popularity--and unpopularity--and because one can construct what could fairly be called the Skinnerian theory of motivation from his choices of effective reinforcers. Skinner uses the term "reinforcer" to refer to things that induce us to behave in a certain way.

> Good things are positive reinforcers. The food that tastes good reinforces us when we taste it. Things that feel good reinforce us when we feel them. Things that look good reinforce us when we look at them. When we say colloquially that we "go for" such things, we identify a kind of behavior which is frequently reinforced by them. (The things we call bad also have no [sic] common property. They are all negative reinforcers, and we are reinforced when we escape from or avoid them.)[1]

Thus, what Skinner calls a reinforcer corresponds to a motivator; it motivates us to "go for" it or avoid it. Skinner's rejection of the term motivation, and his rejection of the notion that these reinforcers are causal antecedents of behavior does not prevent his reinforcers from being de facto what other theoreticians refer to as motivators.

> Thus Skinner employs a set of concepts that might be called dynamic or motivational. These concepts, similar to the motivational concepts in other theories, are employed in order to account for the variability of behavior in otherwise constant situations.[2]

Culling from Skinner's writings his citations concerning reinforcers, we will attempt to discover whether his

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[1]B. F. Skinner, Beyond Freedom and Dignity (New York: Bantam/Vintage Books, 1971), p. 98.

[2]Calvin S. Hall and Gardner Lindzey, Theories of Personality, 2nd ed. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1970), p. 488.

system of "motivation" is self-oriented, as have been the others we have considered thus far.

In addition to his division of reinforcers into positive and negative (aversive), the following passage suggests that he further divides them into "established" or primary reinforcers, such as physical pleasures (caress) and material possessions, and "conditioned" or secondary reinforcers, which include social approval, desirable because it is often associated with the established reinforcers:

> We attest to the value of a person's behavior by patting him on the back, or saying "Good!" or "Right!" or by giving him a "token of our esteem" such as a prize, honor, or award. Some of these things are reinforcing in their own right--a pat on the back may be a kind of caress, and prizes include established reinforcers--but others are conditioned--that is, they reinforce only because they have been accompanied by or exchanged for established reinforcers. Praise and approval are generally reinforcing because anyone who praises a person or approves what he has done is inclined to reinforce him in other ways.[1]

Although social approval, "credit" as Skinner calls it, is a conditioned reinforcer, he recognizes its ubiquity and power in a passage concerning the relationship between credit and "control" (conditions which force us to behave as we do, thus minimizing the credit others accord us):

> We acknowledge this curious relationship between credit and the inconspicuousness of controlling conditions when we conceal control to avoid losing credit or to claim credit not really due us. The general does his best to maintain his dignity while riding in a jeep over rough terrain, and the flute player continues to play although a fly crawls over his face. We try not to sneeze or laugh on solemn occasions, and after making an embarrassing mistake we try to act as if we had not done so. We submit to pain without flinching, we eat

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[1]Skinner, Beyond Freedom, p. 41.

> daintily though ravenous, we reach casually for our winnings at cards, and we risk a burn by slowly putting down a hot plate. . . .In other words we resist any condition in which we behave in undignified ways.[1]

Among aversive reinforcers are not only physical pain and deprivation of freedom, but also the removal of positive reinforcers, such as social approval:

> What we may call the struggle for dignity has many features in common with the struggle for freedom. The removal of a positive reinforcer is aversive, and when people are deprived of credit or admiration or the chance to be commended or admired, they respond in appropriate ways. They escape from those who deprive them or attack in order to weaken their effectiveness.[2]

The motivation of dominance or superiority he recognizes, as shown by the statement of Frazier, the fictional architect of Skinner's ideal community in Walden Two:

> "We don't use the motive of domination, because we are always thinking of the whole group. We could motivate a few geniuses that way--it was certainly my own motivation--but we'd sacrifice some of the happiness of everyone else. Triumph over nature and over oneself, yes. But over others, never."[3]

From these and other statements in Skinner's writings we find that his implicit theory of motivation is pretty much run-of-the-mill: physical pleasure, money, possessions, social approval, sense of personal dignity, dominance, power,[4] love (a "positive reinforcer")[5], etc., all self-oriented. He, like Freud, Adler and Maslow, seems to regard pure altruism, that is, behavior solely motivated by a desire for the

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[1]Ibid., p. 45. [2]Ibid., p. 50.

[3]B. F. Skinner, Walden Two (Toronto: The Macmillan Co., 1962), p. 112.

[4]Ibid., p. 299. [5]Ibid., p. 300.

welfare of others, and with no underlying self-oriented motivation, as a sort of psychological unicorn, quite mythological. His attitude toward apparently altruistic behavior is fairly summed up in his description of the person who sacrifices himself for the community welfare, as symbolized by the hero who saves the village by killing the threatening dragon:

> Suppose, for example, that a group is threatened by a predator (the "monster" of mythology). Someone possessing special strength or skill attacks and kills the monster or drives him away. The group, released from threat, reinforces the hero with approval, praise, honor, affection, celebrations, statues, arches of triumph, and the hand of the princess. Some of this may be unintentional, but it is nevertheless reinforcing to the hero. Some may be intentional--that is, the hero is reinforced precisely to induce him to take on other monsters. The important fact about such contingencies is that the greater the threat, the greater the esteem accorded the hero who alleviates it. The hero therefore takes on more and more dangerous assignments until he is killed.[1]

Further expressing his view that apparently altruistic behavior is merely a matter of rewards, or in his terms, "reinforcing contingencies":

> As organized agencies induce people to behave "for the good of others" more effectively, they change what is felt. A person does not support his government because he is loyal but because the government has arranged special contingencies. We call him loyal and teach him to call himself loyal and to report any special conditions he may feel as "loyalty." A person does not support a religion because he is devout; he supports it because of the contingencies arranged by the religious agency. We call him devout and teach him to call himself devout and report what he feels as "devotion." Conflicts among feelings, as in the classical literary themes of love versus duty or patriotism versus faith, are really conflicts between contingencies of reinforcement.[2]

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[1]Skinner, Beyond Freedom, p. 106.

[2]Ibid., p. 111.

In the same vein:

> The "something to believe in and be devoted to" is to be found among the contrived contingencies which induce people to behave "for the good of others."[1]

In summary, such diverse systems as those of Freud, Adler, Maslow and Skinner agree that human behavior is self-oriented. None of these famous students of human behavior seems to believe in the actuality of human behavior that, in its most basic orientation, is dedicated solely to the welfare of others.

For those who concede the legitimacy of the wisdom of the ancients, the testimony of Plato and Aristotle also supports the view that all human behavior is self-oriented. As mentioned previously, Plato in the Symposium, speaking through the persona of Socrates, voices his views that the noblest Greeks in their noblest deeds were seeking the "immortality of lasting fame." Socrates presents the view of his preceptress Diotima of Mantineae, with whom he fully agrees:

> "Marvel not then at the love which all men have of their offspring; for that universal love and interest is for the sake of immortality."
>
> I was astonished at her words, and said: "Is this really true, O thou wise Diotima?" And she answered with all the authority of an accomplished sophist: "Of that, Socrates, you may be assured;--think only of the ambition of men, and you will wonder at the senselessness of their ways, unless you consider how they are stirred by the love of an immortality of fame. They are ready to run all risks greater far than they would have run for their children, and to spend money and undergo any sort of toil, and even to die, for the sake of leaving behind them a name which shall be eternal. Do you imagine that Alcestis would have died to save Admetus, or Achilles to avenge Patroclus, or your own Codrus in

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[1]Ibid., p. 113.

> order to preserve the kingdom for his sons, if they had not imagined that the memory of their virtues, which still survives among us, would be immortal? Nay," she said, "I am persuaded that all men do all things, and the better they are the more they do them, in hope of the glorious fame of immortal virtue; for they desire the immortal."[1]

We should not be put off by the word "sophist." Plato is applying it to Diotima's skill in address, which he admired in the sophists, and not to her reasoning, which he did not admire in the sophists. Of her sentiments, he says (again speaking through Socrates): "Such, Phaedrus--and I speak not only to you, but to all of you--were the words of Diotima; and I am persuaded of their truth."[2]

Aristotle, as we have cited previously, holds that all of our behavior is directed toward the attainment of happiness for ourselves: "Evidently, then, happiness is something final and self-sufficient, and is the end and aim of all that we do."[3]

Conclusion

In this section we have touched upon the views of some outstanding students of human behavior--Freud, Adler, Maslow, Skinner, Plato and Aristotle. Diverse and opposed though their theories are on many points, they agree in presenting only self-oriented motivations underlying human behavior. Perhaps a fitting conclusion to this section is corroboration from the unlikely agreement of such diverse ideologues as

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[1]Plato, Symposium, p. 167. [2]Ibid., p. 172.

[3]Aristotle Nicomachean Ethics 1. 7.

enthusiastic TV preacher Dr. Robert Schuller and acidulous skeptic Voltaire. Voltaire remarks, amusing in his salacious twist:

> Those who have said that love of ourselves is the basis of all our opinions and all our actions, have therefore been quite right in India, Spain, and all the habitable world: and as one does not write to prove to men that they have faces, it is not necessary to prove to them that they have self-love. Self-love is our instrument of preservation; it resembles the instrument which perpetuates the species. It is necessary, it is dear to us, it gives pleasure, and it has to be hidden.[1]

And Schuller:

> I strongly suggest that self-love is the ultimate will of man--that what you really want more than anything else in the world is the awareness that you are a worthy person. It is the deepest of all the currents that drive man onward, forward and upward. All other drives--pleasure, power, love, meaning, creativity--are symptoms, expressions or attempts to fulfill that primal need for personal dignity.[2]

Some Contemporary Theories of Altruism

Introduction

In the past ten years there has been an upsurge of interest among psychologists and social psychologists in the question of positive social behavior, also referred to as helping behavior or altruism. There has been an increasing realization that the study, prevention and cure of undesirable behavior is only a part of the psychologist's function. Psychology is not complete without a good understanding of

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[1]Voltaire, The Portable Voltaire, ed. Ben Ray Redman (New York: The Viking Press, 1963), p. 200.

[2]Robert H. Schuller, Self-Love: The Dynamic Force of Success (New York: Hawthorne Books, Inc., 1969), p. 21.

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why human beings engage in activity benefitting another, even at sacrifice to self. A Harvard professor remarks:

> It is not difficult to see why altruism has captured the interest of social scientists. In view of its practical and theoretical importance, it may well be wondered why the study of altruism has only recently gained popularity.[1]

Ironically enough, a triggering factor in this surge of interest in altruistic behavior was a classic case of callous behavior. The Journal of Social Issues devotes an entire quarterly issue to "Positive Forms of Social Behavior," with the following preface:

> The Absence of Altruism: The Genovese Case
>
> On a March night in 1964 at least 38 neighbors in the Kew Gardens Apartments in New York City watched a young woman named Kitty Genovese being stabbed to death by an assaultive maniac. Although it took him more than half an hour to murder her, brutally and in cold blood, not one of the witnesses even lifted the telephone to call the police. The victim's cries of terror and her attempts to fight back left no doubt in anyone's mind about what was going on. It was 3:00 A.M. But no one helped.
>
> A torrent of speculation was loosed several weeks later by a New York Times story about the murder. Conclusions ranged from "moral decay" to "apathy." The witnesses themselves said they were afraid, embarrassed, unsure how to proceed in an emergency. They "didn't want to get involved."
>
> This incident, unusual mainly in its documentation, has received from the public and from psychologists such detailed and continued attention that it has come to be considered a classic case in the annals of human social behavior.[2]

As this case vividly points up, one of the tragedies

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[1]Dennis L. Krebs, "Altruism--An Examination of the Concept and a Review of the Literature," Psychological Bulletin 73 (April 1970):258.

[2]Lauren G. Wispé, The Journal of Social Issues 28 (No. 3, 1972), preface.

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of modern socity is our increasing reluctance to engage in helping behavior. As a first step toward alleviating this malaise, social scientists are concerned to discover what motivates us to helping behavior. We will consider some of their theories abou the motives for altruism, to discover what relation these bear to the self-esteem theory.

The term "altruism" was coined in the 19th century by Auguste Comte, the founder of Positivism. Comte's intention was to replace traditional religion with a naturalistic religion of his own devising, whose basic code of morality was devotion to the welfare of others. To this concern for, and contribution to, the happiness of others Comte gave the name altruism. It seems that he did not envision an altruistic act as being entirely devoid of self-interest, for he says:

> When it condenses the whole of sound morality in its law of "Live for Others," Positivism allows and consecrates the constant satisfaction of our several instincts.[1]

Herbert Spencer, sometimes cited as an apostle of altruism, shows the same realism:

> Ethics has to recognize the truth, recognized in unethical thought, that egoism comes before altruism. . . . to say that each individual shall reap the benefits brought to him by his own powers, inherited and acquired, is to enunciate egoism as an ultimate principle of conduct. It is to say that egoistic claims must take precedence of altruistic claims.[2]

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[1]Auguste Comte, Catechism of Positive Religion (London: John Chapman, 1858), p. 54.

[2]Herbert Spencer, The Data of Ethics (New York: American Home Library, 1902), p. 216.

However, sometimes altruism is taken to mean behavior that is totally oriented toward the welfare of others. In this view, if there is an accompanying intention to benefit self, or even an unconscious motivation to benefit self, then the action is no longer to be considered altruistic. For this concept of altruism we will use the term "total altruism." Otherwise we will follow the practice of the contemporary social scientists whose theories we are considering, and use altruism to mean merely "helping behavior," regardless of the motivation behind it.

The "Guilt Theory" of Altruism

When a man brings his wife flowers or candy, on other than a special occasion, observers sometimes banteringly exclaim "Aha! What has he been up to?" This insight that behavior beneficial to others is sometimes motivated by a desire to salve the benefactor's conscience has led to many experiments by social psychologists to test this "guilt theory" of altruism. Sigmund Freud's comments about moral masochism--psychic pleasure in self-abasement--have also given impetus to the guilt theory of altruism.

In the typical experiment, a subject is maneuvered into committing some faux pas, or is led to believe that he has somehow harmed someone, and then later is given an opportunity to engage in helpful behavior. Experimenters have repeatedly found that the persons in the thus-induced guilt condition are more likely to respond favorably to appeals

for help than are "non-guilty" persons. This is true whether the person requesting help is the "victim" or is an independent third party.

> A considerable amount of research has demonstrated a strong relationship between transgression and altruism. . . . Over a wide range of operationalizations of transgression (e.g., shocking a fellow-subject, ruining the experimental equipment, knocking over a box of sequenced index cards), such harm-doing is consistently found to increase one's tendency to comply to the requests of another for aid; the nature of this aid has also been quite varied (e.g., donating blood, participating in subsequent experiments without recompense, hand-scoring exam sheets).[1]

In an article entitled "Guilt-Edged Giving: The Shame of It All," the authors conclude:

> In these cases of generosity, we found support for theories--relatively recent in psychology--that much charitable behavior is motivated by guilt and shame.[2]

This conclusion was the result of an experiment in which students were given a test ostensibly to measure their academic motivation, but which actually was a "laboratory manipulation designed to instill feelings of shame and guilt in some of the subjects." The experimenters distinguish between shame and guilt: "A guilty person reacts to twinges of conscience, but a shamed person reacts to the reactions of others--whether real or imagined."[3] Their "shame theory" proposes that the person who has been humiliated is eager to

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[1]Robert B. Cialdini, Betty Lee Darby, and Joyce E. Vincent, "Transgression and Altruism: A Case for Hedonism," Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 9 (November 1973): 502.

[2]Dennis Krebs and Phillip Whitten, "Guilt-Edged Giving: The Shame of It All," Psychology Today, January 1972, p. 50.

[3]Ibid., p. 52.

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restore his self-image, and is thus likely to accomplish this by favorably responding to appeals for help. The authors attempt to distinguish this "shame theory" from a "guilt theory":

> The theory that one becomes altruistic as a result of causing harm to others--the shame theory--leans heavily on the importance of feedback from others to a person's self-image. The guilt explanations leans on the effect of intrapsychic pain.[1]

Actually it seems very much in accord with the findings of the authors to describe their shame theory and guilt theory as two aspects of a "self-image" theory. They recognize that shame leads to the desire to restore the self-image, and, although the authors do not explicitly give cognizance to this, a feeling of guilt also injures one's self-image, and logically leads to a desire to restore that image. Thus, altruism resulting from a feeling either of shame or guilt has the same ultimate explanation:

> This interpretation suggests that people attempt to maintain a realistic level of self-esteem by acting out particular images in front of others. When self-esteem is low, they act out positive images . . .[2]

The above explanation of the shame theory becomes an explanation of the guilt theory if, for "in front of others" we substitute "in the forum of one's conscience." One might say the shame theory concerns a loss of image in the external forum, while the guilt theory concerns a loss of image in the internal forum.

Others have proposed this self-image explanation for the guilt theory. Another group of psychologists found that

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid.

"some people seem to exhibit their own brand of brotherly love best when they're feeling guilt about something," and conclude "harm-doing lowers self-esteem, which leads to altruism in an attempt by the harm-doer to raise his self-esteem."[1]

From another source:

> Finally, a number of investigators . . . have suggested that a transgressor tends toward altruistic behavior in a desire to restore his self-esteem. It is assumed that the act of harming another, even unintentionally and in what appears to be an unavoidable accident . . . will result in the lowering of one's self-image. In order to bolster a sagging self-concept, the transgressor will seek to perform good works.[2]

Dennis Krebs, in a review of the literature of recent experiments on altruism, concludes:

> In summary, many studies have supported the notion that public transgression, whether intentional or unintentional, whether immoral or only situationally unfortunate, leads to reparative altruism. Reparative altruism would seem to alleviate a negative state associated with lowered self-esteem. When amends cannot be made to the victim, reparative responses are generalized to others; in fact, in some situations reparative responses are made only if they can be directed toward a third party.[3]

Several factors suggest that the loss of self-esteem following transgression is largely due to "loss of face" in the public forum rather than to a realization of failure to live up to an internalized code of ethics. That is, the shame factor is more potent in explaining altruism than is

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[1]"Helping Out," Human Behavior, July 1973, p. 53.

[2]Cialdini, et al., "Transgression and Altruism":504.

[3]Dennis L. Krebs, "Altruism--An Examination of the Concept and a Review of the Literature," Psychological Bulletin 73 (April 1970): 267.

the guilt factor. First, as noted in the above quote, the subject's behavior is the same even though his transgression was unintentional. Unintentional transgression should not weigh upon one's conscience, proper, although it may be deeply offensive to one's social sense of shame. That is, unintentional transgression should not produce true guilt, although it does produce shame. Secondly, in some experiments where the subject thought that his transgression was undetected, very little altruism resulted. Had the loss of self-image been a matter of guilt, that is, in the internal forum of conscience, the altruistic behavior should have resulted whether the transgression was detected or not.

> Two final studies suggest that private transgressions are not as likely to lead to altruistic reparation as public transgressions. Wallace and Sadalla found that subjects who broke an expensive machine were more likely to volunteer for a painful experiment than those who did not, but only if their transgression was discovered. Silverman failed to find a higher incidence of volunteering from children who cheated on a task but did not consider themselves caught than from those who did not cheat.[1]

Perhaps this supports Sigmund Freud's statement that most people never develop a super-ego to any significant extent.

The "Self-Esteem Theory" of Altruism

The guilt theory studies show that a person who has committed a recent transgression is more likely to respond favorably to requests for assistance than is a non-transgressor. Taking this as his starting point, David McMillen theorized that self-esteem was lowered by the transgression, and

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[1]Ibid.

and that the subject was therefore more likely to engage in an altruistic act in order to restore his self-esteem. To test this theory experimentally, some subjects (students) were given an opportunity to cheat on an exam, then after the exam some of the subjects were given a "self-esteem manipulation" by showing them a very favorable personality rating (bogus) about themselves. Then all subjects were presented with an optional opportunity to perform a task. Results showed that subjects who had cheated were significantly more likely to volunteer for the helpful task than were non-cheaters, provided that the cheater had not received a self-esteem manipulation following the test. Those who had received such a manipulation were not significantly different from the non-cheaters in their altruism. The author concludes:

> The data suggest that self-image is an important factor in determining if compliance increases following transgression. Evidently, the individual is primarily concerned about how transgression affects him, rather than how it affects the person transgressed against. The cognition that he has transgressed is inconsistent with his self-image. The compliant request gives the individual an opportunity to bolster his self-image by doing something good. If an incident occurs which restores self-esteem before the compliance request is made, the subject does not need to comply to restore his self-image.[1]

McMillen proposes that his theory is an improvement on the guilt theory, offering the previously missing psychic link explaining why guilty persons should be more altruistic.

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[1]David L. McMillen, "Transgression, Self-Image, and Compliant Behavior," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 20 (no. 2 1971):176.

> The "self-esteem" interpretation of compliance following transgression is a refinement of the guilt interpretation. Transgression theoretically may lead to guilt, but there is no obvious reason why compliance should alleviate guilt. The individual knows he has transgressed, regardless of whether he complies or not. However, if the compliance behavior can function to raise self-esteem, this may compensate for any loss of self-esteem sustained as a result of experiencing guilt. Knowledge of guilt will still be present, but its saliency will be reduced.[1]

In his excellent review of experimental studies of altruism, Dennis Krebs offers support for the self-esteem theory:

> The Darlington and Macker (1966), Krebs and Baer (unpubl.), Carlsmith and Gross (1969), and Freedman et al., (1967) studies suggest that reparative altruistic behavior relieves an unpleasant negative state associated with lowered self-esteem by supplying a situation in which a wrong can be righted and self-esteem elevated. . . .[2]
>
> In summary, many studies have supported the notion that public transgression, whether intentional or unintentional, whether immoral or only situationally unfortunate, leads to reparative altruism. Reparative altruism would seem to alleviate a negative state associated with lowered self-esteem.[3]

The "Relief of Negative Affect" Theory of Altruism

Cialdini et al. reject the guilt theory of altruism, and its corollary, the self-esteem theory of altruism, because neither seems able to explain the increase of altruistic behavior among witnesses to a transgression, who were themselves quite innocent of the transgression. Certainly, according to Cialdini, these witnesses should not be feeling guilt nor loss of self-esteem, and thus have no motivation

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[1]Ibid., p. 179.

[2]Krebs, "Altruism," p. 267.

[3]Ibid.

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to indulge in altruistic acts to repair an injured self-esteem. How then to explain the fact that such witnesses do actually show an increase in altruistic behavior as compared with control groups who did not witness the transgression? These psychologists propose the following explanation:

> In its simplest form this explanation--which might be called Negative State Relief--postulates: first, that altruism is one technique, among many, which people use to make themselves feel good; and second, that the sight of another's suffering is seen to produce a general, negative affective state, and altruism is seen as but one of several ways a person might go about relieving that state. The reason that many studies have shown altruism to follow transgression is that the first opportunity the experimenter affords the subject to restore his affective positivity is the opportunity to be charitable.[1]

To test this theory, the experimenters arranged for some subjects to commit a "transgression" by accidentally knocking over a box of indexed computer cards. "Oh, heavens, John spent hours arranging these cards. I can't bear to think what he is going to say when he finds what a mess they are in." Other subjects merely witnessed the cards being knocked over. It was theorized that observation of the accident would produce a negative affect in the innocent witnesses, an assumption supported by the testimony of Weiss et al. that "their subjects witnessing another being harmed sweat visibly, frequently express verbal distress, and exhibit other signs of strain."[2]

Next, some of the subjects in each group were given a

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[1]Cialdini et al, "Transgression and Altruism":505.

[2]Ibid., p. 509.

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chance to "relieve the negative affect" resulting from causing or seeing the accident. The relief condition was accomplished by giving some of the subjects an unexpected dollar for participating in the experiment, and in other cases by complimenting the subject on his competence is solving a maze. Then, all subjects were asked to help a second experimenter by doing interviews of students by telephone.

As predicted, those subjects who had committed a transgression, or had witnessed it, were much more likely than were the control subjects to offer to help the experimenter. And those who had witnessed or caused the transgression, but had been given a dollar or a compliment to relieve their negative affect, were no more helpful than were control subjects. The experimenters conclude:

> Because the Negative State Relief model asserts that one will be altruistic in order to reduce general affective negativity, it should follow that any procedure which induces such a negative mood will increase the tendency to help. Thus, procedures other than transgression which diminish affective tone ought to enhance benevolence as well. A number of studies provide evidence that this is indeed the case.[1]

Although the authors of this study have rejected the self-esteem theory of altruism, we suggest that actually the self-esteem motivation can explain their results. They reject the self-esteem theory for two reasons:

> First, transgression witnesses who received a compliment, also were no more charitable than a control group. Unless we are willing to maintain that one who observes a harmful act experiences as much self-image damage as one who performs it, this result cannot be explained by employing the concept of self-esteem. Second, the

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[1]Ibid., p. 513.

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> presentation of a monetary payment which was not contingent upon the quality of a subject's task performance produced a benevolence which was identical to that of a performance-contingent compliment. Subjects receiving the payment were made to understand that the same amount of money was automatically given to all experimental participants; thus, it is highly unlikely that they would have experienced a gain in self-esteem as a result. The Self-Esteem Bolstering interpretation, then, cannot account for the lack of helping in subjects who received the monetary payment.[1]

To this we will attempt to respond as the authors of the Self-Esteem Bolstering theory might do. In response to the first point, it seems plausible that just as the witness to a transgression feels by empathy a "negative affect," as the experimenters assume, so also the nature of that negative affect will be the same in the witness as in the transgressor with whom he is empathizing. That negative affect is humiliation at his clumsiness in knocking over the cards, that is, he is experiencing a self-esteem loss. That we sometimes experience embarrassment (self-esteem loss) from empathy with another is common experience. We feel mortification when our school football team makes a poor showing; we sometimes cringe in embarrassment when a personality on TV, even someone we have never heard of previously, makes a fool of himself. It seems quite predictable then, that some of the subjects would feel sufficient empathy with the transgressor to share, to a degree, his humiliation and embarrassment.

Cialdini's second point is that the compliment used

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[1]Ibid., p. 512.

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to alleviate negative affect would also restore self-esteem, but the dollar reward would have no effect in restoring self-esteem because the subject was led to believe that all the subjects were receiving the dollar. This reasoning would be valid if our only source of self-esteem boosts were through comparison with others. However, self-esteem boosts also come from comparison with our former state. Acquisition of the dollar gives the recipient a feeling of superiority, a self-esteem boost, over his former state. To the affluent reader this may seem to be making too much over the acquisition of a pitiful little dollar, but in fact the experimenters found that the dollar meant enough to the subjects to provide "relief of negative affect."

Thus it seems that the objections raised by Cialdini against the self-esteem theory of altruism can be adequately answered, and that the desire to restore injured self-esteem can explain his experimental results. As a matter of fact, the "negative affect" concept which he uses to explain altruistic behavior seems, in the context of their experiment, to be merely injured self-esteem, in the form of empathized embarrassment.

The "Elation Theory" of Altruism

Apparently in flat contradiction to the guilt, shame, self-esteem and negative affect theories of altruism is the elation theory. As we have seen, the former theories amount to an explanation of altruism as an attempt to restore injured

self-esteem. The elation theory, in contrast, asserts that an individual is more likely to engage in altruistic behavior when his self-esteem is already unusually high. This idea is very much in harmony with our every-day experience. Mother and the children know that the best time to approach daddy for a favor is when he is in a good mood. It is folk wisdom to ask for a raise only when the boss is in an expansive mood.

Several attempts have been made by social psychologists to provide experimental support for this common sense approach. We will briefly sketch some of these studies and their findings, then attempt an analysis of the human motivation involved. In a 1970 study, the experimenter induced a "warm glow of success" in some subjects by giving a test in "perceptual-motor skills" to a group, half of whom were later given a glowingly favorable report on their success, and the other half of whom were told that they had performed poorly. Then all subjects were given an opportunity to donate to a charity. In a later version of the experiment, all subjects were given the opportunity to be helpful to a stranger. In both versions of the experiment, the "success" subjects proved to be significantly more altruistic than were either the "failure" or control subjects. The failure and control subjects did not significantly differ from one another in their altruism, leading the author to reject the explanation that failure-induced hostility would result in

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lowered altruism. The experimenter concludes that a "warm glow of success" heightens altruism, but she is unable to supply the reasons as to just why this should be the case:

> The warm glow of success hypothesis, however, does not really clear up the matter of why success subjects are more helpful than other subjects. . . . But the nature of this link and the distinguishing aspects of success-induced good feeling (if such there be) remain to be examined and specified. . . . In addition, one might ask whether any kind of feeling good would lead to helping others, or whether there is something unique about the good feeling which results from success.[1]

Two possible psychic links between success and altruism are suggested:

> The exact operation of this warm glow could not, of course, be specified, but two possibilities seemed reasonable: one supposed that individuals who have experienced success feel more positive toward others; the second was that such people feel more competent, able to cope with the world and events that might occur, and less in need of clutching all of their resources to themselves. These two descriptions, clearly, are not mutually exclusive.[2]

To discover whether increased altruism was due to a feeling of competence at having succeeded, or was due merely to a "good mood," other experimenters have given cookies to subjects or arranged for them to find a dime, then tested their willingness to engage in acts helpful to an independent third party. The subjects thus favored were significantly more helpful than were control subjects, thus giving support to the hypothesis that altruism results from a good mood, even with no change in feelings of competence.

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[1]Alice M. Isen, "Success, Failure, Attention, and Reaction to Others: The Warm Glow of Success," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 15 (August 1970):300.

[2]Ibid., p. 295.

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These "cookie and dime" results were reported by Aderman, who also used another approach to inducing moods. He had some subjects read fifty positive mood statements ("I'm full of energy!" "I feel great!," etc.), while other subjects read fifty negative mood statements ("all the unhappiness of my past life is taking possession of me now," "I want to go to sleep and never wake up," etc.), and the controls read neutral statements. His findings:

> The results of the present experiment provide support for the notion that people in a good mood are generally more willing to be helpful than people in a bad mood. . . . The helping differences between the two prior mood groups appear to have been due, in part, to the depression subjects' greater readiness to perceive the requests for help as threats to their behavioral freedom.[1]

Aderman also suggests that Adam's Equity theory may be the explanation for his findings. We will consider the Equity Theory in a later section.

A 1974 study supported the conclusion that a good mood (positive affect) increases altruism. Some subjects (second and third grade children) were asked to think about things in their experience that made them feel sad, others were asked to think about things that made them feel happy, and the control group did some simple counting exercises. Then all subjects were presented with an opportunity to help themselves to candies and to contribute money to a fund for

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[1]David Aderman, "Elation, Depression, and Helping Behavior," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 24 (October 1972):99.

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needy children. They could do either, both or neither of these. The results: happy children contributed more than did unhappy children or controls. There was no difference in altruism between unhappy children and controls.

An interesting further finding of this experiment is that both happy and unhappy children took more candy than did control children. Thus, contrary to what may be popular opinion, an inclination to be self-rewarding is not necesarily antithetical to altruism. "It is now empirically clear that altruism does not require self-immolation, or even self-denial."[1]

Why does positive affect increase altruism? The experimenters explain:

> Negative affect, by definition, increases the psychological distance between self and other. It creates, in Tomkins's (1962) colorful expression, a sociophobe. Quite commonly children in the negative affect condition would think of events that hurt them or made them angry. We suspect that natural tendencies arise to comfort self, by heightening self-reward, and to punish others, by decreasing their reward.
>
> Positive affect, in contrast, decreases psychological distance, making one feel good about the self and others. Again in Tomkins's terms, positive affect creates a sociophile. . . . Because the psychological distance between self and others is decreased, one feels about others as one does about oneself. To the extent that one is generous to oneself, one will predictably be generous with others.[2]

Thus, in essence it seems fair to paraphrase the

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[1]D. L. Rosenhan, Bill Underwood, and Bert Moore, "Affect Moderates Self-Gratification and Altruism," Journal of Personality and Social Psychology 30 (October 1974):551.

[2]Ibid., p. 550.

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authors' conclusions by saying that positive affect leads us to identify ("one feels about others as one does about oneself") with others, and therefore be more ready to help this extended self.

The fact that the negative affect subjects in this study were less altruistic may seem to contradict the fact that negative affect subjects in the guilt and shame studies proved to be more altruistic. Perhaps the reconciliation lies in the fact that the negative affects in the opposed studies were of different types. In the previous studies, the negative affect was customarily one of embarrassment, loss of face, either direct or empathized. In such a case, doing a good deed would help to regain face. In the latter studies, the negative affect is not so much a loss of face as it is anger or sadness. In the grip of such affects, the subject is not usually motivated to do a good deed to prove that he is a good guy after all, but rather he is motivated to strike out at the perceived source of his disgruntlement, or if that is not possible, to grumble and feel ill-will.

We have seen that the self-esteem theory can explain altruism following transgression, as an attempt to boost injured self-esteem. But how can the self-esteem theory explain altruism following increased positive affect? The Isen study, as we have already quoted, offered two possible psychic links between positive affect and altruism: a more positive feeling toward others, and a feeling of greater ability to cope with life. The Rosenhan, Underwood and

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Moore study suggests substantially the same two explanations. First, there is an increased sense of identification and empathy with the person in need of help, an increase resulting from positive affect. "Because the psychological distance between self and others is decreased, one feels about others as one does about oneself."[1] The authors hint at the second factor, coping, when they remark that "the more one is touched by negative affect, the more one conserves resources."[2] Conversely, the more one is enjoying positive affect, the less one feels the need of conserving resources, because of the feeling "I've got it made."

Actually, it might seem that the self-esteem theory would predict that a person would always seize the opportunity to help others, thus brightening his self-image. However, there are possible self-esteem losses associated with particular acts of altruism--"Is he trying to take advantage of me?" "I don't want to get the reputation for being a push-over," "I had to work hard for mine and he gets his the easy way. No thanks," etc. Thus, the fear of these self-esteem losses inhibits our tendency to seek a self-esteem gain from helping others. But in a positive mood, whether induced by success in a task, by a compliment, by receiving a cookie, or by thinking happy thoughts, we are in a condition of heightened self-esteem and thus feel more self-esteem security and are less threatened and inhibited by the possibility of loss involved in helping another.

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[1]Ibid., p. 550. [2]Ibid., p. 551.

But would not such a condition of heightened self-esteem, for the very reason of satiety, lessen our drive to acquire more self-esteem and thus lessen our altruistic activities? Actually our desire for self-esteem is insatiable. Satisfaction of desire here only inflames desire furthur. As Augustine said "satisfaction of desire opens wide the jaws of desire." As Goethe said of himself, successes inspire him to "drive the pyramid of his existence ever higher."

It seems we can derive self-esteem from two opposite roles, each suited to a different mood. The person in an elated, expansive mood is prepared to step into the flattering role of Mr. Bountiful: "Meet Diamond Jim, the last of the big spenders! Nothing is too good for my friends, and you, stranger, are my instant friend. I always say, when you got it, spread it around!" But in a depressed mood, or perhaps even in a normal mood, we are more disposed to get ego gratification by playing the role of Mr. Shrewd, playing his cards close to his chest, looking out for #1, and not to be taken advantage of by anyone. Naturally, both of these behaviors are automatic, without any conscious advertance to which role we are stepping into.

The "Equity Theory" of Altruism

The "equity theory" of personal interchange, most extensively and explicitly developed by Stacey Adams, has stimulated considerable research to ascertain its usefulness

in predicting employee behavior. In simplest terms, the theory states that an individual feels he should get the same proportionate reward from an interchange as obtained by the others involved in the "deal." More precisely, the equity theory proposes that in any interchange, each party involved feels tension unless he perceives that the ratio of his investment in the interchange to his return is equal to a similar ratio on the part of the others involved. The interchange may be any personal interaction, but Adams is especially concerned with transactions in the industrial world--hiring, wages, promotions, working conditions, etc. He uses the term "inputs" to describe the investment that a Person makes in the transaction; this investment includes all the relevant "plus" entities that Person perceives (not as perceived by an unbiased observer) himself as bringing to the transaction. Thus, inputs to a hiring situation might include Person's experience, his personality, competence, connections, and anything else that he subjectively perceives as a relevant contribution to the interchange. Adams uses the term "outcomes" to signify the rewards of various sorts that Person subjectively perceives himself as obtaining from the interchange. In assessing his input, Person will also include perceived negative entities that he brings to the transaction, perhaps lack of experience, poor record on last job, etc. The same is true when he assesses his total outcome; he will include in the picture negative aspects such as monotonous job, long commuting trip, etc. Thus, his total input will

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be the summation of postive and negative features that he brings to the transaction, as estimated by himself. Similarly, his total outcomes will be the summation of positive and negative results he sees coming to himself from the transaction. Naturally, Person is interested in maximizing the Outcome/Input ratio.

But also, Adams postulates, Person feels uneasy if his Outcome/Input ratio is different from that of the other parties involved in the transaction. The other parties may be the boss, the corporation, fellow workers, his friends in a similar line of work--the Other is not limited to the other parties to the transaction, but may include any others with whom Person is comparing himself. It is a matter of common experience that if Person perceives his Outcome/Input ratio as less than that of Other, he will feel disgruntled. But Adams states that even in the opposite condition, where common sense might predict that Person would feel jubilation over coming out of the deal with a greater Outcome/Input than does Other, Person still feels uneasy, and will be motivated to reduce that inequity, even though the inequity is in his own favor. This conclusion is Adam's derivation from Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, which we have considered in an earlier section. In a nutshell, the cognitive dissonance theory states that we resist those cognitions which are at variance with our present cognitions. When Person perceives an inequity favoring the Other, this presumably creates dissonance with his previous cognition

of himself as a fair and just person.

> . . . two general postulates are presented, closely following propositions from cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957). First, the presence of inequity in Person creates tension in him. The tension is proportionate to the magnitude of inequity present. Second, the tension created in Person will motivate him to eliminate or reduce it. The strength of the motivation is proportional to the tension created. In short, the presence of inequity will motivate Person to achieve equity or to reduce inequity, and the strength of motivation to do so will vary directly with the magnitude of inequity experienced.[1]

Thus, the situation that Person is seeking to maintain or obtain is:

$$\frac{\text{Outcome}_P}{\text{Input}_P} = \frac{\text{Outcome}_O}{\text{Input}_O}$$

If Person perceives imbalance favoring either side he is motivated to restore balance. This, Adams offers, can be accomplished in any, or a combination, of the following ways:

1. Person alters his own inputs, outcomes, or distorts them by self-deception.
2. Person leaves the field. (Quits job, backs out of deal.)
3. Person alters the inputs, or outcomes of Other, or distorts them by self-deception.
4. Person forces Other to leave the field.
5. Person changes the object of his comparison. (Well, the company may be getting the best of me in this deal, but at least I'm doing better than Charley.")

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[1]Stacy Adams, "Inequity in Social Exchange," in Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, vol. 2, ed. Leonard Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1965), p. 283.

Equity Theory Applied to Altruism

Adams' equity theory has been adapted by Walster, Berscheid and Walster to explain altruistic behavior. They postulate that when Person perceives that a transaction favors himself more than it does Other (this situation they describe as "harm-doing" on the part of Person, regardless of his intent or whether any actual harm was done to Other), then Person feels distress. "We will emphasize two possible sources for the harm-doer's distress: retaliation distress and self-concept distress."[1] Thus, Person is motivated to restore equity in order to prevent some sort of retaliation, by Other, or perhaps by God or a Just World; and secondly, to maintain his self-image as being a just and fair person. (Accomplishment of this latter objective will diminish Person's cognitive dissonance.) The authors suggest that Person will seek to restore equity by any of the following ways: Self-delusion (deciding that the victim deserved his fate , denying Person's own responsibility, minimizing the victim's sufferings, etc.); compensation to victim; or self-punishment. Under self-punishment the authors include self-abasement (apologies), self-injury and altruistic behavior toward independent third parties ("altruism" toward the victim would be compensation).

Several theorists have proposed that after injuring

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[1]Elaine Walster, Ellen Berscheid, and G. William Walster, "The Exploited: Justice or Justification," in Altruism and Helping Behavior, ed. J. Macauley and L. Berkowitz (New York: Academic Press, 1970), p. 181.

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> another, individuals will be especially willing to endure costs to perform altruistic acts for the benefit of persons other than the victim. . . . Such altruistic acts do not restore equity directly to the harm-doer-victim relationship. It is possible, however, that the performance of such altruistic acts may be perceived as restoring equity with the "world in general" and, therefore, with the victim indirectly.[1]

Thus the altruistic act helps to relieve Person's self-concept distress ("I am a good person after all"), and his retaliation distress ("A just fate will now spare me further retribution"). In essence, then, this theory seems indistinguishable from the guilt theory we have already considered. As in the case of the guilt theory, self-esteem considerations explain the whole procedure. Relieving self-concept distress is another way of saying "restoring injured self-esteem." Relieving retaliation distress is forestalling possible future loss of good, i.e., self-esteem loss, and/or sense pleasure loss.

The "Projection Theory" of Altruism

Anna Freud has suggested a form of altruism which she describes as arising from the ego defense mechanism of projection. Projection is the psychic process by which we refuse to admit to consciousness those thoughts and desires which would be offensive to the ego were they admitted, and instead attribute those thoughts and desires to others. Thus, the person seething with inner hostility may deny that fact and instead see the external world as bristling with hostility toward himself. Usually the process of

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[1]Ibid., p. 186.

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projection is a socially negative force, but Anna Freud suggests that it can have a positive aspect, leading us to attribute some of our socially acceptable desires to others and to work for the fulfillment of those desires in the other. In other words, the process of projection can lead to a concern for the welfare of others:

> The mechanism of projection disturbs our human relations when we project our own jealousy and attribute to other people our own aggressive aims. But it may work in another way as well, enabling us to form valuable positive attachments and so to consolidate our relations with one another. This normal and less conspicuous form of projection might be described as 'altruistic surrender' of our own instinctual impulses in favour of other people.[1]

Anna Freud offers an example of this from among her analysands. A young governess, single and childless, unassuming and shabbily dressed, displayed a high degree of what we might call unselfish interest in her friends:

> She might be said to display an unusual degree of concern about her friends' having pretty clothes, being admired and having children. Similarly, in spite of her own retiring behaviour, she was ambitious for the men she loved and followed their careers with the utmost interest. It looked as if her own life had been emptied of interests and wishes; up to the time of her analysis it was almost entirely uneventful. Instead of exerting herself to achieve any aims of her own, she expended all her energy in sympathizing with the experiences of people she cared for. She lived in the lives of other people, instead of having any experience of her own.[2]

Through analysis Freud arrived at the explanation that this young governess by early renunciation of instinct

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[1]Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defence (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1946), p. 133.

[2]Ibid., p. 135.

had developed an exceptionally severe super-ego which "made it impossible for her to gratify her own wishes."

> But these impulses were not repressed: she found some proxy in the outside world to serve as a repository for each of them. The vanity of her women friends provided, as it were, a foothold for the projection of her own vanity, while her libidinal wishes and ambitious phantasies were likewise deposited in the outside world. . . . Her super-ego, which condemned a particular instinctual impulse when it related to her own ego, was surprisingly tolerant of it in other people. She gratified her instincts by sharing in the gratification of others, employing for this purpose the mechanisms of projection and identification. . . . The surrender of her instinctual impulses in favour of other people had thus an egoistic significance, but in her efforts to gratify the impulses of others her behavior could only be called altruistic.[1]

Freud does not propose that this projection mechanism explains all forms of altruistic behavior, but she does maintain that it has a wide applicability:

> Any number of cases similar to those which I have quoted can be observed in everyday life, when once our attention has been called to this combination of projection and identification for purposes of defense.[2] . . . The surrender of one's own wishes to another person and the attempt to secure their fulfillment thus vicariously are, indeed, comparable to the interest and pleasure with which one watches a game in which one has no stake oneself.[3]

Freud cites the case of Cyrano de Bergerac as a classic example in literature of projection altruism. Cyrano's love for the beautiful Roxanne being incapable of fulfillment because of his monstrous nose, he identifies with the handsome Christian and not only makes every effort to help Christian win Roxanne's love, but even risks his own life in battle attempting to save Christian.

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[1]Ibid., p. 136. [2]Ibid., p. 139. [3]Ibid., p. 140.

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Thus, the projection theory of altruism amounts to vicarious satisfaction of desire. The individual, blocked in his satisfaction of some sense pleasure or self-esteem desires, seeks their gratification through a substitute self.

The "Transferred Aggression" Theory of Altruism

Anna Freud offers a "transferred aggression" explanation for the Robin Hood type of altruism, in which the benefactor exerts aggression against the establishment or against other authority figures in behalf of the oppressed. This theory has a topical interest in the light of demands in recent years by radical kidnappers that the victim's rich relatives provide "two million dollars worth of free food for the poor." According to Freud's analysis, some persons who have had renunciation of instinctual gratifications imposed upon them by parents may build up feelings of hostility toward the parents. These feelings of hostility may not be overtly expressed toward the parents but are transferred in adult life to other authority figures, and overtly expressed, with apparently altruistic motives serving as the justification:

> An employee who would never venture to ask for a rise in salary for herself suddenly besieged the manageress with demands that one of her fellow-workers should have her rights. Analysis of such situations shows that this defensive process has its origin in the infantile conflict with parental authority about some form of instinctual gratification. Aggressive impulses against the mother, prohibited so long as it is a question of fulfilling the subject's own wishes, are given rein when the wishes are ostensibly those of someone else. The most

> familiar representative of this type of person is the public benefactor, who with the utmost aggressiveness and energy demands money from one set of people in order to give it to another. Perhaps the most extreme instance is that of the assassin who, in the name of the oppressed, murders the oppressor. The object against which the liberated aggression is directed is invariably the representative of the authority which imposed renunciation of instinct on the subject in infancy.[1]

Summary of Recent Theories About Altruism

We have seen quite a variety of theories proposed by modern psychologists concerning the cause of altruistic behavior. We will briefly review each and restate how in each case the relevant variable can be traced to a self-esteem or sense pleasure motive. For clarity, we repeat that by the term "altruism" the authors customarily mean helping behavior, regardless of motive.

Anna Freud's projection theory of altruism is a matter of the altruist identifying with the other, and desiring sense pleasures and self-esteem gratifications for this extended self--"vicarious gratification," as she terms it. Her "transferred aggression" theory of altruism is a case of venting hostility against authority figures in order to benefit third parties. Robbing the establishment is a tremendous self-esteem boost for Robin Hood, and his donation to the poor both serves as justification and gives additional increments of self-esteem in the form of righteous self-image and public popularity. The element of identification with the poor can also be a factor.

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[1] Ibid., p. 141.

The guilt theory ascribes altruism to an attempt to salve a troubled conscience. The shame theory suggests that an attempt to regain face after public humiliation is a more likely explanation. Both of these cases are patently matters of wounded self-esteem, which the agent attempts to restore by his noble deed. In the "relief of negative affect" theory, the negative affect was embarrassment at a social faux pas. Obviously this too is a matter of wounded self-esteem. This theory has the added feature that even a witness to the "transgression" is likely to show altruistic behavior. Common experience shows that we can feel embarrassment in empathy with another, putting the empathizer in the same condition of temporarily ruffled self-esteem, in need of repair.

Positive affect was said to lead to altruism because it decreases the psychological distance between self and others, leading one to feel about others as one does about self. This is a good description of identification. Positive affect also causes the possessor to feel less need to conserve his resources. Both of these factors dispose the agent to step into the flattering role of Mr. Bountiful, jovially dispensing largesse of money, time and good will.

In the equity theory the altruist is seen as motivated by an attempt to restore the balance of benefits after he has received what he considers disproportionate benefits in some social transaction. The proponents see two deeper motivations behind this altruistic urge--retaliation distress and self-concept distress. The latter is the desire

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to restore the subject's self-image as a fair and just person. The former is his desire to avoid future sense pleasure or self-esteem losses.

All of the foregoing modern psychological theories of altruism explicitly present self-oriented motives on the part of the altruist, and as we have seen, all of them implicitly present self-image or sense pleasure as the root motivating force. Regarding the possibility of "pure" altruism, that is, behavior beneficial to another with no underlying self-oriented motive, not even the praiseworthy identification motif, the authors make the following comments.

Anna Freud, disagreeing with her father, concedes the possibility that there may be such a thing as pure altruism. However, one feels that in such concession she may be following the advice of her father "Much will be forgiven the author who occasionally makes a low bow in the direction of human nature." She does not seem sanguine about the possibility of pure altruism:

> It remains an open question whether there is such a thing as a genuinely altruistic relation to one's fellow-men, in which the gratification of one's own instinct plays no part at all, even in some displaced and sublimated form. In any case it is certain that projection and identification are not the only means of acquiring an attitude which has every appearance of altruism; for instance, another and easy route to the same goal is by way of the various forms of masochism.[1]

Among the other authors we have considered, those who touch on this question adopt the same cautious scientific attitude, ready to concede pure altruism if evidence is

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[1]Ibid., p. 146.

forthcoming, but pointing out that as yet there is no such evidence:

> In this case of altruism after transgression, then, it would seem that the primary motive for helping is a selfish one. Of course, no general statement about the nature of altruism can be made solely on the basis of the present data; it may be that in some other situations helping behavior does involve unselfish concern for the welfare of another. As yet, however, there seems to be no empirical evidence for such selflessness.[1]

At the end of Krebs' review of recent literature on altruism he summarizes the findings regarding the most likely beneficiaries of altruism:

> When it came to social roles of recipients, an examination of the effects of friendship status, ingroup affiliation, and social class suggested that people give to those who are similar to them, to those who are prestigious, and to those from whom they stand to gain.[2]

The first characteristic, personal similarity to benefactor, suggests identification at work. The other two characteristics indicate more directly self-oriented motives. Krebs concludes:

> Many have welcomed the new research on the positive aspects of man, but it should be realized that the study of beneficial behaviors does not establish the existence of altruism. Elucidation of the phenomenon of altruism, is, in fact, as capable of shaking the foundation of man's self-conception as elucidation of such things as aggression and anxiety. Unfortunately, the fact that man acts altruistically does not mean that he is altruistic. The hopeful thing about research, however, is that at the same time as it sorts out antecedants, it identifies mechanisms that can lead to a change.[3]

An unsigned article in Human Behavior magazine concludes:

> Thus empathy is still another basis for altruism--

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[1]Cialdini, et al., "Transgression and Altruism":515.

[2]Krebs, "Altruism":298. [3]Ibid.

> in addition to guilt, competence, bribes and favors, dependency and threats. Whatever become of giving for its own sake?[1]

Emphasizing a postive note in man's ability to identify and emphathize with others, "Guilt-Edged Giving" notes:

> Because a significant part of man's pleasure is derived from the happiness of those with whom he identifies, man is not doomed to eternal selfishness, even though he has hedonistic drives to maximize pleasure and minimize pain. For empathic persons, it is often more rewarding to give than to receive.[2]

As a final emphasis, we wish to repeat that not all of this self-orientation in our "altruistic" behavior is to be equated with selfishness. Selfishness means a lack of concern for the welfare of others. In behavior motivated by identification and empathy, indirectly self-oriented though these are, we see strong concern for the welfare of others. Even "altruistic" behavior that is not motivated by identification, but by enlightened self-interest of a more directly self-oriented type, may still be accompanied by a sincere concern for the welfare of others. Therefore it seems quite accurate to say that much helping behavior is definitely unselfish. Indeed, it we bear all these things in mind we can justifiably continue to use the word altruism without "quotes."

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[1]"Helping Out," p. 54.

[2]Krebs and Whitten, "Guilt-Edged Giving":77.

Altruism Proposed by Religion and Ideology

Introduction

In this section we will attempt to discover what exhortations various influential ideologies give to altruistic[1] behavior, and also to discover what motivations these ideologies suggest to their followers to encourage altruistic behavior. Do they urge "total" altruism, with no reward envisioned for the agent, or does the ideology, or religion, give a clue as to some motive behind the altruism, either a reward of some sort, or an identification with the recipient?

We will consider Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism, a representative group of thought systems which have an impact on the lives of billions of human beings. Omission of other religions or ideologies is not intended as any reflection on their influence or altruistic qualities. It is not our concern to "take sides" as to which is more altruistic. Our concern is to consider the preachings that each gives its adherents to behave altruistically, and the incentives it offers to back up that preaching. That an ideology suggests self-oriented motives to encourage altruistic behavior is not tantamount to saying that the ideology is encouraging selfishness. As we have already seen, the higher reaches of self-interest certainly should not be

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[1]Once again, by the term "altruistic" we mean, unless qualified by the word "total," merely behavior that is helpful to others, abstracting from motive.

stigmatized as selfishness.

Inasmuch as identification and self-realization are the most frequent motivations that these thought systems propose in their exhortations to altruistic behavior, it may be worthwhile at this point to re-state the relationship between each of these and self-esteem. By self-esteem we mean awareness of good possessed by self. Good is any thing or quality which the individual considers desirable. Self-realization is the continuing process of acquiring the fullest degree of good of which one is capable. It is satisfying to the degree that one becomes aware, directly or indirectly, of the good he is acquiring. That is, by definition, as his self-esteem increases. As we have developed previously, human desire is more directed toward awareness of good possessed than toward actual possession of the good. Awareness, even false, satisfies desire, whereas possession without awareness does not satisfy desire.

Identification is the consideration of another as an extended self, with the result that the other's joys and sorrows become one's own joys and sorrows. The mother's attitude toward her children is the classic example. To the degree that we identify with another, his acquisition of good is our acquisition of good. Awareness of his acquisition of good is then, by definition, an increase of our self-esteem. Parents glow with self-congratulation, as well as congratulations for their offspring, in the achievements of their offspring--"he's our boy!" Of course, the triumphs of those

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who are close to you do not always increase your self-esteem. To the extent that you are comparing yourself to the person close to you, rather than identifying, his achievements can be a threat to your self-esteem. Douglas Fairbanks, jr., suggests that this may have been the motivation behind his famous father's fury when Doug, jr., began acting in movies at the age of sixteen. A youthful image was the most prized possession of the elder Fairbanks, and his son, who so resembled him, was making him look old by comparison.

An additional motivational factor underlying the altruistic behavior of a follower of any of the ideologies we are going to consider is the implicit desire to have a favorable self-image as a faithful follower of that ideology. The Hindu is moved to kindly deeds at least partially by his desire to enhance his self-image as a "good Hindu," or as one who is advancing toward moksha, or even as one who in his humble way is something of a holy man. Similarly, the Buddhist is moved to helping behavior by his desire to see himself as one who shows the compassion that Buddha urged, or perhaps even to reassure himself that he is on his way to becoming a Bodhisattva (enlightened one who dedicates himself to the service of others). The Christian may want to consider himself a faithful follower of Jesus, and thus show charity to others. He may even have a self-concept of saintliness and behave with appropriate charity to accord with that self-image. The zealous Marxist wants to think of himself as such, and is thus willing to sacrifice for the

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revolution and the party in order to live up to his self-image. Each of these believers wants to avoid the self-image of being a hypocrite, unfaithful to his professed beliefs. And for the less zealous members of each of these ideologies, there may be the altruism-inspiring desire to consider himself an unselfish, concerned person, one of the "good guys." He wants to avoid the self-image of being callous, selfish, indifferent to the welfare of his fellow man.

Concurrently with the above, the desire to present a good image to friends, leaders, or the world at large may be operative. Of crasser motivations we will say nothing. Probably in any particular case of helping behavior, by an adherent of any religion or ideology, the actual motivating factors will be an involved combination of many of the above. The agent may be ready to admit some of these motivations, and may be ready to vigorously deny, even to himself, other of his actual motivations. If an "altruistic" act is done to heighten one's self-image as an unselfish, concerned person, then that same motivation dictates that he conceal such a motivation from himself. This unconscious juggling of our psychological books has been commented on by others:

> . . . if altruistic acts are engaged in because of an anticipated psychological reward, then this "anticipation" must somehow be barred from awareness so that the positive nature of the act remains intact. Otherwise, the reason (reward) responsible for eliciting the helping response will be negated.[1]

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[1]Miles R. Moynier, "Helping Behavior: Self-Sacrificing or Self-Serving" (M.A. dissertation, San Diego State University, 1975), p. 31.

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Altruism in Hinduism

Justifiably or not, Hinduism has not had an outstanding reputation as a religion that encourages helping behavior. In the popular mind, Hinduism is connected with the rigid discrimination of the caste system, with holy men lying on beds of nails, with hordes of sacred cows flourishing while human beings starve, and with maharajahs luxuriating in the midst of famine. Needless to say, this is not a fair representation of the richly complex Hindu culture. If knowledgable observers of the world scene were asked to name the most altruistic personality of the Twentieth Century, surely Mahatma Gandhi would receive many nominations. And Gandhi, although deeply influenced by Christianity and by various currents of Western thought, was basically a product of Hinduism. Here was a life single-mindedly devoted to improving the lot of his fellow countrymen. Louis Fischer says of him: "Gandhi was a unique person, a great person, perhaps the greatest figure of the last 1900 years."[1] From Gandhi's own professed sentiments we see his concern for others:

> My life is one indivisible whole, and all my activities run into one another, and they all have their rise in my insatiable love of mankind.[2]
> . . . such must be my constant desire that this body also may be surrendered at the will of God, and while it is at my disposal, must be used not for dissipation, not

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[1]Mohandas K. Gandhi, The Essential Gandhi, ed. Louis Fischer (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), foreword.

[2]Mohandas K. Gandhi, All Men Are Brothers, ed. Krishna Kripalani (New York: World Without War Publications, UNESCO, 1972), p. 4.

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> for self-indulgence, not for pleasure, but merely for service and service the whole of your waking hours. . .[1] Our desires and motives may be divided into two classes--selfish and unselfish. All selfish desires are immoral, while the desire to improve ourselves for the sake of doing good to others is truly moral. The highest moral law is that we should unremittingly work for the good of mankind.[2]

Not all of Gandhi's altruistic sentiments were due to his Hindu background. He states that his moral outlook was influenced by Christian sources also, especially by the life of Christ and by Tolstoy's writings. But we can find in Hindu philosophy three ideas that may well have had an influence in developing Gandhi's concern for the welfare of others. One is the view that all reality is one, not multiple as we Westerners customarily think of it. That one reality is a spiritual, immaterial, impersonal entity, sometimes called Brahman (not to be confused with Brahma, one of the Hindu gods, nor with Brahmin, the priestly caste). What appears to be physical reality is merely maya, illusion. Within each of us is Atman, the self. This immaterial entity is identical with Brahman, inasmuch as there is only one reality, not many. Also, your Atman is identical with my Atman, and with that of all other beings. We are One, not many. Brahman, the great THAT, is identical with Atman, your true self. This doctrine is summed up in the phrase "tat tvam asi," ("That art Thou.") In a previous section we saw that Schopenhauer lauded this doctrine as the basis for the greatest nobility of human thought and behavior. This explicit identification of all beings lays

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[1]Ibid., p. 40. [2]Ibid., p. 69.

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a natural basis for treating others as self. The I-Thou relationship is one of identity. The implications of this for altruism is stressed by S. Radhakrishnan in response to Albert Schweitzer's charge that Hinduism has not been concerned with active service to one's fellow man:

> Schweitzwer forgets that the great text "That art Thou' (tat tvam asi) is bound up with an ethic of active service. He writes: Easy as it would be to turn the doctrine of tat tvam asi in an ethical direction, they nevertheless neglect to do it.' At the end of his Indian tour Dr. Paul Dessen said to a gathering at Bombay: 'The Gospels quite correctly establish as the highest law of morality, "Love your neighbor as yourselves." But why should I do so since by the order of nature I feel pain and pleasure only in myself, not in my neighbor? The answer is not in the Bible. . . . but it is in the Veda, in the great formula That art Thou which gives in three words the combined sum of metaphysics and morals. You shall love your neighbor as yourselves because you are your neighbor.' In the words of the Bhagavadgita: 'He who knows himself in everything and everything in himself will not injure himself by himself.' Every person round me is myself at a different point of space and time and at a different grade of being. When one realizes that all beings are but the self (atmaiva-bhut), one acts not selfishly but for all beings.[1]

The same observation is made by N. K. Devaraja:

> Here again, the idealistic systems of Advaita-Vedanta[2] and Buddhism are able to furnish better reasons for shedding off selfishness and looking upon other creatures exactly as upon oneself--thereby avoiding any partiality for one's own self--than the realistic Hindu systems. To the question, 'why should I be unselfish or not self-centered?' the Advaita reply is: because there is no distinction whatever between the

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[1]S.Radhakrishnan, Eastern Religions and Western Thought, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), p. 101.

[2]Advaita-Vedanta is the monistic Hindu philosophy. By contrast, "realistic Hindu systems" propose the view, more common among the Hindu masses, that each god and each being is a distinct entity.

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> real self that is you and the real self that informs the being of other creatures.[1]

It does not seem far-fetched to suppose that this sense of identification was one of the motivating factors in Gandhi's devoted service to others--to extended selves.[2]

The corollary of tat tvam asi is the doctrine of ahimsa, the teaching that one must avoid doing violence to any living creature, as far as is possible.

> "All saints (Arhats) and Lords (Bhagavats) in the past, in the present and in the future, they all say thus, announce thus and declare thus: One may not kill, nor ill use, nor insult, nor torment, nor persecute any kind of living being, any kind of creature, any kind of thing having a soul, any kind of beings. That is the pure, eternal, enduring commandment of religion which has been proclaimed by the sages who comprehend the world."[3]

The Hindu reverence for cows is only one aspect of their reverence for all living beings. Although ahimsa is in its nature a negative injunction, "do not violence to any living thing," nevertheless this is one aspect of altruism. Also, the concept embodies a concern for the welfare of other beings and can logically spill over into positive action to promote that welfare. Admittedly, the results of ahimsa have not always been happy ones for the people of

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[1]N. K. Devaraja, Hinduism and Christianity (London: Asia Publishing House, 1969), p. 36.

[2]We do not mean to suggest that Gandhi was completely orthodox in any of the Hindu schools of thought. He says that he accepted whatever in tradition seemed reasonable to him, and rejected the rest.

[3]Albert Schweitzer, Indian Thought and Its Development (London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1936), p. 82.

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India. The Hindu refusal to kill rats has been estimated to cost India one fourth of its total food production every year.

Ahimsa was a key feature in Gandhi's philosophy, although he was not totally orthodox in his practice of it. For instance, he ordered that venemous snakes found in his small community (ashram) be killed, whenever it was not practical to capture them and take them to an isolated spot for release. He was quite ready to kill mosquitoes and other bothersome insects,[1] but he does say that he probably would not be able to kill monkeys even to prevent them from destroying the ashram's crops. Gandhi's ahimsa was directed primarily toward other human beings. He forbade his followers to use violence against the British overlords, and he practiced an ahimsa of the spirit by refusing to hate anyone. "But I do not hate the domineering Englishman as I refuse to hate the domineering Hindu."[2] Altruism in the practice of ahimsa is a logical result of the sense of identification arising from the monistic view of reality.

A third element in Hinduism that may contribute to altruistic behavior is the doctrine of moksha. Moksha means

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[1]This calls to mind an incident in the life of Albert Schweitzer, whose philosophy also was one of great reverence for life. A journalist interviewing Schweitzer was about to swat a mosquito on his arm when Schweitzer, leaping up, sharply ordered him not to hit the insect. Schweitzer brought a drinking glass, clapped it over the burrowing mosquito, then slipped a piece of cardboard between the the glass and the astounded newsman's arm. With the mosquito entrapped in the glass, Schweitzer took it outside and released it.

[2]Gandhi, All Men Are Brothers, p. 37.

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liberation, release. The goal of human life is to seek release from the continuing series of bodily reincarnations, in order to merge with Brahman. As long as your Atman still has desires it will, after the death of your body, be reborn in another body so that it may satisfy those desires. To the extent that you have lived a good life, your next reincarnation will be a more spiritually minded person. But if you have lived a life much given to lust or ambition or greed your next reincarnation will be a gross sort of person, or even an animal. Since desire and resulting physical rebirth involves both suffering and imperfection, the ideal of the orthodox Hindu is to become so spiritual, so free from worldly desires, that he need not be reborn, but instead may merge with Brahman, like a drop of rain falling into the ocean. This moksha can be obtained by service to others, according to the karma school of Hindu thought.

To obtain moksha by service to others was Gandhi's expressed goal in life:

> What I want to achieve--what I have been striving and pining to achieve these thirty years--is self-realization, to see God face to face, to attain Moksha. I live and move and have my being in pursuit of this goal. All that I do by way of speaking and writing, and all my ventures in the political field, are directed to this same end.[1]

He further specifies that the motive behind his altruistic service to others was this desire for self-realization:

> If, in South Africa, I found myself entirely absorbed in the service of the community, the reason behind it

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[1]Ibid., p. 3.

was my desire for self-realization. I had made the religion of service my own, as I felt that God could be realized only through service.[1]

Other statements in the same vein:

> I am but a humble seeker after Truth and bent upon finding it. I count no sacrifice too great for the sake of seeing God face to face. The whole of my activity whether it may be called social, political, humanitarian or ethical is directed to that end. And as I know that God is found more often in the lowliest of His creatures than in the high and mighty, I am struggling to reach the status of these. I cannot do so without their service. Hence my passion for the service of the suppressed classes. And as I cannot render this service without entering politics, I find myself in them. Thus I am no master, I am but a struggling, erring, humble servant of India and, therefore, of humanity. . . .[2]
>
> Man's ultimate aim is the realization of God, and all his activities, political, social and religious, have to be guided by the ultimate aim of the vision of God. The immediate service of all human beings becomes a necessary part of the endeavour simply because the only way to find God is to see Him in His creation and be one with it. This can only be done by service of all. And this cannot be done except through one's country. I am a part and parcel of the whole, and I cannot find Him apart from the rest of the humanity. My countrymen are my nearest neighbours. They have become so helpless, so resourceless, so inert that I must concentrate on serving them. If I could persuade myself that I should find Him in an Himalayan cave I would proceed there immediately. But I know that I cannot find Him apart from humanity.[3]

Whether Gandhi's goal was to merge with Brahman after death or merely to attain a self-realization in the present life, much as Abraham Maslow describes, is not a matter for our concern here. The relevant fact is that his service to others was motivated by his desire for self-perfection of

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[1]Mohandas K. Gandhi, The Mahatma and the Missionary, ed. Clifford Manshardt (Chicago: Henry Regnery & Co., 1949), p. 41.

[2]Gandhi, All Men Are Brothers, p. 68. [3]Ibid., p. 57.

some type. He did not see this as detracting from the value of his service to others, nor do we.

Thus in Hinduism can be found at least the following underlying motivations for altruistic behavior: identification, as proposed by THAT art Thou; self-realization, as envisioned by moksha and union with Brahman (even though some see this union as a loss of individual self); and ahimsa, which can be inspired both by a sense of identification with others and a desire to obtain moksha. The relation of identification and self-realization to self-esteem we have considered already.

Altruism in Buddhism

Gautama Buddha (c. 550 B.C.) has become celebrated for his compassion and love toward all beings. He is reported to have addressed his followers thus:

> 'Monks, that ariyan disciple, who is thus without covetousness and malevolence, not bewildered but self-possessed and recollecting, with a heart possessed of love abides suffusing one quarter of the world, likewise the second, third and fourth quarters of the world, likewise above, below, across, everywhere, for all sorts and conditions--he abides suffusing the whole world with a heart possessed of love that is widespreading, vast and boundless, without enmity or malice.[1]

And he urges his disciples to express their good will in action:

> 'There are, monks, these four bases of sympathy. What four? charity, kind speech, doing a good turn, and treating all alike.'[2]

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[1] Devaraja, Hinduism and Christianity, p. 39.

[2] Ibid.

This compassion and concern for the welfare of others has been emphasized more in the Mahayana tradition (found in China and Japan) of Buddhism than in the older Theravada tradition found in South-East Asia. Mahayana ("the greater vehicle") teaches that all beings will eventually achieve Nirvana (believed by some to be enlightenment in this life, by others to be a blessed state achieved in another life). Theravada (also called Hinayana, or "lesser vehicle") Buddhism envisions Nirvana as the lot of only those few who have completely renounced the world and all desires. In Mahayana the one who has achieved buddhahood will refuse to enter Nirvana, preferring to be reborn and devote himself to helping others achieve enlightenment, until all can enter Nirvana together. Such a person is referred to as a "Bodhisattva." As M. Anesaki says in his History of Japanese Religion, quoted by E. A. Burtt:

> "The central idea in Buddhist teaching is the gospel of universal salvation based on the idea of the fundamental oneness of all beings. There are in the world, Buddhism teaches, manifold existences and innumerable beings, and each of these individuals deems himself to be a separate being and behaves accordingly. But in reality they make up one family, there is one continuity throughout, and this oneness is to be realized in the attainment of Buddhahood on the part of each and all, in the full realization of the universal communion. Individuals may purify themselves and thereby escape the miseries of sinful existence, yet the salvation of anyone is imperfect so long as and so far as there remain any who have not realized the universal spiritual communion, i.e., who are not saved. To save oneself by saving others is the gospel of universal salvation taught by Buddhism.[1]

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[1]E. A. Burtt, The Teachings of the Compassionate Buddha (New York: Mentor Books, 1955), p. 124.

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In Theravada the enlightened one passes into Nirvana, his contribution to the welfare of others being the example he has left them:

> . . . Theravada Buddhism is continuous with the Buddhism of the early disciples in emphasizing the necessity of renouncing the world and aggressively pursuing the path of self-conquest, irrespective of how many other people are prepared to folow one's lead in taking such a step. Its spiritual ideal is symbolized by the arahat--the individual who in self-sufficient homelessness has overcome the power of tanha, thrown aside the fetters which bind him to the cycle of birth and death, and has thus gained the unutterable peace of Nirvana--the assurance that he has accomplished what it behooved him to accomplish, and that for him the weary series of rebirths has been brought to an end. For others, he has also done the greatest thing that could be done. He has set them an inspiring example of one who boldly explores ahead and he has shown them the way to the spiritual goal; when they are ready, in understanding, aspiration, and determination, they will follow.[1]

Theravada Buddhists claim to be closer to the spirit of Gautama, asserting that Mahayana, a later development, is a distortion of Buddha's teaching. Theravadin cite words attributed to Gautama which indicate that he was not concerned with an after-life as proposed by Mahayana Buddhism, but was merely concerned with attaining enlightenment in this life:

> On a certain occasion the Blessed One was dwelling at Savatthi in Jetvana monastery in Anathapindika's Park. Now it happened to the venerable Malunkyaputta, being in seclusion and plunged in meditation, that a consideration presented itself to his mind, as follows:
> "These mysteries which the Blessed One has left unexplained, has set aside and rejected--that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, that the soul is one thing and the body another, that the saint exists after death, that the saint does not exist after death,

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[1]Ibid., p. 123.

> that the saint both exists and does not exist after death, that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death--these the Blessed One does not explain to me."[1]

This of course is contrary to the usual Mahayana teaching that there is a Nirvana for the faithful ones after death.[2]

The altruism found in Buddhist teaching then seems to be centered largely in the Bodhisattva, the enlightened one who has decided to forego entrance into Nirvana in order to be reborn and help others to attain enlightenment. We find a twofold clue in Buddhist thought indicating the possible motivation for this decision of the altruistic Bodhisattva: self-realization and identification. His self-realization is not complete until he has helped all to enlightenment:

> . . . the salvation of anyone is imperfect so long as there remain any . . . who are not saved. . . . To save oneself by saving others is the gospel of universal salvation taught by Buddhism.[3]

The theme that concern for others is due to identification is strong in Buddhism. The following passages are an expression of the Mahayana Buddhist ideal, and are taken from the Bodhicharyavatara of Santiveda, who lived about

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[1]Ibid., p. 32.

[2]Actually, these neat distinctions are not always verified in real life. The few Vietnamese Buddhists (presumably Theravada) to whom I have spoken do believe in an after-life, and the two or three Japanese Buddhists to whom I have spoken do not believe in an after-life. One is tempted to the generalization that more sophisticated Buddhists, wherever found, tend not to believe in continued consciousness after death, and tend to be non-theistic; whereas the simpler folk, wherever found, tend more to believe in an after-life (the "Western Paradise," or "Pure Land") and to believe in some sort of supremely powerful being, Amitabha Buddha, for instance.

[3]Ibid., p. 124.

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600 A.D.:

> By pondering in such wise upon the excellences of solitude a man stills vain imaginations and strengthens his thought of Enlightenment. First he will diligently foster the thought that his fellow-creatures are the same as himself. "All have the same sorrows, the same joys as I, and I must guard them like myself. . . . I must destroy the pain of another as though it were my own, because it is a pain; I must show kindness to others, for they are creatures as I am myself. . . . Then, as I would guard myself from evil repute, so I will frame a spirit of helpfulness and tenderness towards others."[1]

We find the same theme in the description of the Bodhisattva:

> A Bodhisattva is one who, having attained the goal of purification and emancipation, refuses to enter Nirvana, out of devoted love for those who still remain behind and a consuming zeal to help them. He postpones his own entrance into perfect bliss because his sense of spiritual oneness with others leads him to prefer to wait with them and lovingly serve them until all are ready to enter together. In Anesaki's words, he feels that his own salvation would be imperfect, and even impossible, as long as any living beings remain unsaved.[2]

Finally, someone might make the observation "how is it possible to thus speak of self-oriented motivations in Buddhism, which denies the very existence of the self?" It is true that some schools of Buddhism teach that the self has no objective existence. The logic of the denial of the self runs thus: Man's ultimate goal is to be freed from the suffering that this life entails. This suffering comes from unfulfilled desire. Therefore, to eliminate suffering one must eliminate his desires. And desires are for the self. Therefore, to eliminate desires we must strike at their very root,

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[1] Ibid., p. 139.

[2] Ibid., p. 127.

and eliminate our consciousness of an individual self.

From the Bodhicharyavatara:

> Whatever mischiefs are in this world and whatever pains and fears, they are all due to acceptance or belief in self; so, what use is it for me to cling to or cherish this self? It is not possible to get rid of pain without abandoning the self, just as it is not possible to avoid burning without abandoning fire.[1]

And:

> To the question, 'why should I be unselfish or not self-centered?' . . . convincing is the reply of the Buddhist in terms of his presuppositions. He says in effect: Since there is no abiding entity called your own self, there is no point in being partial to yourself; one should be impartial as between the so-called one's self and the so-called others selves.[2]

But, however much the concept of self may be denied, Buddhism still urges the individual to seek enlightenment for that entity which the ignorant call the self, and to seek enlightenment for those who are identified with that entity.

Altruism in Christianity

In the New Testament we find Christ frequently exhorting his followers to show a loving concern for the welfare of others. In almost all cases he suggests to the follower a self-oriented motive as rationale for altruism. For instance, each of the beatitudes, urging the disciple to better attitudes or conduct, is followed by mention of a reward the disciple can expect. In those beatitudes concerned with what we might call helping behavior, we find

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[1]Devaraja, Hinduism and Christianity, p. 29. [2]Ibid.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," and "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."[1]

Throughout his Sermon on the Mount Christ points out to his followers that if they seek any reward "from men" they will not receive a reward from God. Thus he is calling for behavior that is indeed totally disinterested in any reward such as praise, honor, or recognition from men. But at the same time he urges his followers to seek God's approval and rewards.

> "Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. . . . But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."[2]

Other counsels for ideal behavior which Christ offers in the Sermon on the Mount--forgive those who have offended you, turn the other cheek when struck, give to those who beg or wish to borrow from you, forgive your enemies and pray for them, etc.--are followed at the end of the discourse by an appeal to self-interest:

> "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came,

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[1]Matt. 5:9. (Revised Standard Version. This version is used in all Bible references in this study, unless otherwise specified.

[2]Matt. 6:1-4.

> and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it."[1]

Included among these injunctions whose reward will be a character like a "house built upon a rock" which will not be shaken in time of crisis is the most famous exhortation to helping behavior, the Golden Rule: "So whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets."[2] This quintessential rule for altruistic behavior, then, Christ has backed up with an appeal to self-interest. Further, there seems to be no evidence in the New Testament to support the contention of those who might remark "But here Christ is speaking to beginners. From those advanced in Christian ways he expects total altruism, quite devoid of any hope of reward."

When Christ's apostles asked him quite bluntly what they would get in return for the sacrifices they had made to follow him, he answered:

> "Truly I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life."[3]

In his description of the last judgment Christ praises those who have engaged in helping behavior such as feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, sheltering the homeless, visiting the friendless, etc., and proclaims their reward: "Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom

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[1]Matt. 7:24-7. [2]Matt. 7:12. [3]Matt. 19:28-9.

prepared for you from the foundation of the world; . . ."[1] In the same passage we see another aspect of Christ's appeal to his hearer's self-interest. To those who will refuse to engage in helping behavior, he says: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; . . ."

Identification and self-realization, which we saw as motives underlying altruism in Hinduism and Buddhism, are also present in Christianity. Traditional Christian doctrine[2] offers a threefold basis for the identification of each person with all others: first, the identification of origin--all have been created by the same Father; second, the identification of nature--all have the same nature and are equally subject to the commandments of God; and third, an identification of projected destiny--God desires that all persons go to heaven. Christ sums up the concept of identification: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."[3]

The rubric of self-realization, self-actualization, embraces the Christian's search for perfection: "You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;"[4] for peace of soul: "learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly

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[1]Matt. 25:34.

[2]Relevant for our present considerations is the mainstream traditional interpretation of Christianity as it has influenced the lives of billions down through the centuries. This implies no judgment on the validity of dissenting views.

[3]Matt. 22:39.

[4]Matt. 5:48.

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in heart, and you will find rest for your souls;"[1] and for the glorious state of being he hopes to have in heaven.

But what are we to say of those passages in the New Testament which seem to forbid the Christian to operate on self-interested motives? For instance:

> "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me."[2]

And:

> . . . in humility let each regard the others as his superiors, each one looking not to his own interests but to those of others.[3]

Actually, these exhortations to give up self and self-seeking, exhortations which are found in most of the world's great religions, seem to be concerned with renouncing the more immediate forms of self-seeking--pleasure, money, fame, glory, honor, social approval, etc.--in order to better obtain the more long-range and secure benefits for self, whether visualized as heaven, moksha, nirvana, satori, or self-actualization.

But surely Christ calls his followers to total altruism when he says: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."[4] Here he sets as the model for Christian charity his love for mankind, and surely this was not a self-interested love? This love was self-renunciation to the utmost: "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."[5] Or was

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[1]Matt. 11:29. [2]Luke 9:23.

[3]Philip. 2:4. (Catholic Confraternity Edition).

[4]John 15:12. (Rev. St. Version). [5]John 15:13.

there even here, together with his love for others, still a motivation that is indirectly self-oriented, that of identification with others, identification with my friends, my brethren. Even in Christ's supreme act of altruism, his sacrifice on the cross, he is not unmindful of the reward awaiting him:

> . . . looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.[1]

Traditional Christian doctrine, Protestant and Catholic, assures us that even the love of God the Father for mankind is ultimately and properly self-interested: God created all things for his own greater glory, as well as to share his goodness with creatures. According to traditional Christian doctrine, creation did not add to God's glory or excellence, which was already infinite from all eternity, but made that glory manifest to creatures. Does this somehow cheapen God's love for us? Christian tradition has not seen it in this light. Rather, Christian tradition has seen it as eminently fitting that the greatest good--God--should be most loved and glorified by all, including by Himself.

A totally altruistic love for God and neighbor

Apparently contradicting all that we have said thus far is a teaching in the Roman Catholic tradition which asserts the possibility of a totally altruistic act.

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[1]Heb. 12:2.

According to the mainstream of Catholic tradition, the Christian who is in the "state of grace" (state of friendship with God, with no unforgiven serious sin on his soul) has a share in God's nature. That is, such a person not only has human nature but has been given by God a participation in the Divine Nature. Having that Divine Nature, he can act according to that nature. Its most essential act is an act of charity, which is love for God above all things, for His own sake, and love for neighbor for God's sake. This act of love for God is of the same sort as God's love for himself, inasmuch as the individual is acting with God's nature, which he shares. Such a love is the desire that God possess good--that he be glorified, praised, honored, obeyed, served and his will be done. "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." This act of love for God is not an "interested love," not a desire that the individual himself receive any benefit, but is both a rejoicing that God possesses the fullest good, and a desire that creatures "add" to that good (nothing can be added to perfection, but creatures are considered to be adding to God's external glory by their praise, love and service). Of course, in a partial and oblique way even this disinterested love redounds to the benefit of the lover, in that he is avowing "Thy will be done," and one aspect of that will is the eternal happiness of all creatures, including the lover.

Some Protestant groups have beliefs equivalent to this

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Catholic teaching, although stated in different terms. Based on Christ's words "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God,"[1] (and other texts) some Protestants believe that the person who by faith accepts Christ as his Savior is born again, that is, acquires a new nature as a child of God, in addition to his human nature. He is now regenerated, a new creature in Christ. His former motivations for pleasure, money, honor, etc., are now dominated by his desire to love, glorify and serve God. The "old man" is now subjugated (although he is always trying to reassert himself) to the "new man in Christ."

In both of these traditions the love for God in its highest expressions is totally altruistic, as is the concommitant love for neighbor for God's sake. This doctrine poses a challenge not only to our position that apparently altruistic behavior is ultimately self-oriented, but also challenges the entire thesis we have been developing in this book. We have proposed that all human behavior is motivated by the individual's desire for an awareness of <u>good possessed by self</u>. This awareness can be of two types: one is what we commonly call sense pleasure, the other we have denominated as self-esteem. But the religious tradition we have just considered says "No, there is a third motivation underlying some acts of some human beings, and that motivation is the desire that <u>God possess good</u>. Such a desire can be

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[1]John 3:3.

equivalently phrased as 'love for God above all for His own sake, and love for neighbor for God's sake,' or as the 'theological virtue of charity.'"

The first logical step in considering such a claim is to search for concrete empirical evidence pointing to the existence of this third motivation. What examples of human behavior can be found which cannot be explained by the desires for sense pleasure and self-esteem, but only by the desire that God possess good--i.e., be glorified, loved, obeyed and served? In casting about for such examples, cases of willing martyrdom seem like possibilities. But here we run into the difficulty that even persons who do not believe in God are sometimes willing to die for a cause. Also, even St. Paul admits the possibility of martyrdom for motives other than love for God: "If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing."[1]

Can we accept as evidence for the existence of this self-transcending love for God the attitudes and behavior of some Christians who have made it their concern to act contrary to the desires for sense pleasure and self-esteem? Hagiographies are replete with examples of persons who, after conversion, spent the rest of their lives denying themselves creature comforts and inflicting pain upon themselves. This certainly is contrary to our desire for sense pleasure, but might be explained by the desire for an exalted self-image

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[1]I Cor. 13:3.

as a dedicated, holy person. However, many of these people also seemed to act against the desire for a good self-image, desiring instead to be held in contempt by others, to be ridiculed, hated, ignored, despised, and further, to have a correspondingly low self-regard, considering themselves as vile, sinful, despicable. The rationale offered for thus acting contrary to sense pleasure and self-esteem is that these are the desires competing with love for God in the psychic arena. To the extent that sense pleasure and self-esteem flourish, love for God will wither. And to the extent that sense pleasure and self-esteem are curbed, cut back, then love for God and truly altruistic love for others can flourish.

But is such an expressed attitude to be accepted as empirical evidence for the existence of this third motivation, the love for God above all? Or is it possible that even in his humility and self-abasement the individual is actually but unwittingly seeking to nourish his self-image as a person on fire with love for God, as a holy saint, as one of the elect? Sometimes in hagiographies we find the saint expressing concern on this very point, anxious lest all his self-denials have been self-deceits, ostensibly directed to the glory of God, but perhaps actually directed to self-glorification. Thus it seems that any empirical evidence that might be cited for the existence of this love for God transcending all self-interest is ambiguous, subject to interpretation as merely another expression of the desire for a good self-image.

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It is not our purpose in this book to attempt an assessment of any empirical evidence on this point. Such a project offers little hope of any definitive conclusion. Those who believe in the existence of a self-transcending love for God above all things base their views principally (entirely?) upon faith in revealed teachings. Attempting an assessment of the validity of matters of supernatural faith is outside the scope of this book. We merely suggest that examples of such saintly behavior, valuable though they are from a cosmic viewpoint, are such a miniscule proportion of the total human scene as to constitute a quantitatively insignificant exception to our general theory.

Altruism in Marxism

There can be no doubt that Marxism, both in theory and practice, demands altruism. For its adherents it holds up the ideal that behavior should always conduce to the good of what is alternately referred to as "the masses," the proletariat, the revolution, or the party. There is of course no conflict between these various entities, since the party is the agent of the revolution, and the revolution derives its justification from the intention to benefit the masses, who are identified with the proletariat. This ultimate criterion of morality is, obviously, altruistic. The individual is esteemed as behaving morally insofar as his conduct is considered by those in authority to promote the welfare of the revolutionary masses.

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> We say that our morality is wholly subordinated to the interests of the class-struggle of the proletariat. We deduce our morality from the facts and needs of the class-struggle of the proletariat. . . .[1]

The exhortation to overcome egoism and be zealous for the welfare of the revolutionary masses is a theme constantly running through the writings of Mao Tse-Tung. He holds up individualism and liberalism for condemnation for giving self-interest priority over the revolution:

> Liberalism manifests itself in various ways . . . To show no regard at all for the principles of collective life but to follow one's own inclinations . . . Not to obey orders but to give pride of place to one's own opinions. . . . To be indifferent to them (the masses) and show no concern for their well-being, forgetting that one is a Communist and behaving as if one were an ordinary non-Communist . . . Liberalism stems from petty-bourgeois selfishness, it places personal interests first and the interests of the revolution second, and this gives rise to ideological, political and organizational liberalism.[2]

Even the so-called "small group" mentality, which might be considered altruism on the local scale, is denounced as egoism, taking into consideration the full scope of revolutionary concerns:

> The "small group" mentality. Some comrades consider only the interests of their own small group and ignore the general interest. Although on the surface this does not seem to be the pursuit of personal interests, in reality it exemplifies the narrowest individualism and has a strong corrosive and centrifugal effect.[3]

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[1]V. I. Lenin, Religion (New York: International Publishers, 1933), p. 47.

[2]Mao Tse-Tung, Combat Liberalism (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1967), p. 1-3.

[3]Mao Tse-Tung, Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1968), p. 60.

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"Fight self, repudiate revisionism," is a phrase taken from Mao's writings which has inspired a spate of articles in the Peking Review. "Revisionism" refers to the attempt by "China's Khruschov"[1] to use appeals to self-interest in a campaign to increase production. This "worm, opportunist, pirate and renegade" even went so far as to suggest that land be given to the peasants, on the premise that they would cultivate their own land more assiduously than the communal land. It was to crush this "bourgeois capitalist" and his followers that Mao launched the Cultural Revolution. Especially horrifying to the Maoists were the words of "China's Khruschov" glorifying self-interest:

> Liu Shao-chi drivelled that a Communist should "love himself," "take good care of himself" and "protect his own life and health." In his eyes, oneself is everything and one's life is everything. The Party's interests, revolutionary principle and national dignity could all be sold provided "his own life and health" could be protected.[2]

That this counsel to take good care of one's self, so much an axiom in capitalist society, should arouse the indignation and revulsion of the Red Guard writer, shows the vast difference in altruistic orientation in communism as compared with capitalism.

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[1]Many of the articles in the Peking Review condemning "China's Khruschov" give him no other name. His name is Liu Shao-chi, and at the time of these articles (1968-9) he is referred to in the present tense, as though he was still actively spreading his revisionist doctrine despite the cultural revolution and Mao's denunciations. Other sources reveal that this worm, opportunist, pirate, renegade and traitor scab was president of the country.

[2]Chi Hsiang-Tung, "Repudiating Liu Shao-chi's Renegade Philosophy," Peking Review, February 28, 1969, p. 11.

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China's Khruschov, rank renegade to the proletariat, goes on to unmask his "ugly soul" by the following remarks, which are "nothing but the jargon of the stock exchange vividly portraying the ugly features of this selfish worm."

> "Utter devotion to the public interest does not exclude, but includes, consideration of self-interest; due consideration is given to both public interest and self-interest and the latter comes after the former."[1]

This meliorating concession of primacy to public interest does not blunt the wrath of the Peking Review writer. He retorts: "The devil, after all, is the devil no matter how hard he tries to disguise and beautify himself."[2]

The most forceful elaboration of Mao's "fight self" doctrine is presented in an appropriately unsigned article in the Peking Review. A few quotes from the article illustrate the spirit of subordinating self to the interests of the revolutionary masses, which is the hallmark of Marxism.

> The core of the proletarian world outlook is the concept of public interest, and the core of the bourgeois world outlook is the concept of self-interest. . . . The great leader Chairman Mao teaches us to foster "utter devotion to others without thought of self" and "absolute selflessness" and to "serve all the people of China and the world" "wholly" and "entirely." This represents

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[1] "Vigorously Foster the Proletarian Concept of the Public Interest," Peking Review, May 24, 1968, p. 30.

[2] It is a curious phenomenon how frequently the writers in the Peking Review, although not believers in the occult and preternatural, use terms of that realm to denounce class enemies. Devils, demons, ghost and ghouls are some labels for those who depart from Mao's thought. It is reminiscent of the Russian Khruschov's statement that enemies of the revolution "will burn in hell forever."

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> the proletarian world outlook. . . .
>
> The fundamental idea of Marxism-Leninism is to make revolution. The proletarian vanguard fighters think about, speak about and do nothing but this. They seek neither fame nor fortune, fear neither hardships nor death, work heart and soul for the public interest all their lives and never give a thought to personal "loss" or "gain."[1]

These principles are fleshed out in the Peking Review by occasional accounts of heroes of the revolution, little people, sacrificing their own interests for comrades or cause. Their sacrifices may be the pleasure of a moment, as with Wang Yin-o, girl commune member, who was torn with indecision about whether to attend a film being shown in the commune, or to help the kitchen crew finish doing the dishes. She realized in an instant that her desire to attend the movie "was self-interest, and that it showed her indifference to her comrades and to the work." She conquered this selfish urge by persisting in finishing all the jobs left to do in the kitchen. Greater was the sacrifice of Wang Hsiu-chen, head of the Political and Propaganda Group of the Workers' G.H.Q. in Shanghai. She refused the automobile that the comrades assigned to her, and continues to use the bus or walk. When a comrade took a picture of her and hung it, enlarged, in the Party office, Wang Hsiu-chen indignantly tore it up. Such personal fame is a bourgeois trap which exposes the comrade to "defeat by sugar-coated bullets."[2] More dramatic was the behavior of Hou Ming-fa, fisherman. Six Soviet

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[1] Ibid., p. 30-1.

[2] "Wang Hsiu-chen--Proletarian Revolutionary Woman Fighter," Peking Review, May 3, 1968, p. 33.

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ruffians, knives in hand, attempted to steal the catch his commune had made. Undaunted by the odds, Hou Ming-fa attacked them armed only with an oar. "Having a guilty conscience . . . the sabre-rattling Soviet revisionist intruders turned tail."

Winning the Order of Merit, First Class, was Leng Peng-fei, who "'during a counter-attack in self-defense against the armed provocations of the Soviet revisionist social-imperialists," braved a hail of Soviet bullets to lead his unit to bayonet-point range, where "we were burying the new tsars."

Does Marxist practice match its preaching?

We have seen that the predominant--almost exclusive--note in Marxist literature is self-sacrifice for the success of the revolution and for the welfare of the revolutionary masses. Granted then that Marxism urges altruism upon its people, at least two other considerations remain: do the social and economic conditions in Marxist countries encourage altruism, and second, can we point to actual evidence of any unusual degree of self-sacrifice among Marxist peoples?

Several elements point to an affirmative answer to the first question. The Marxist is thoroughly imbued with the belief that his system is the glowing hope and future of the human race. He realizes that the world has its eyes on the Marxist experiment in his own nation and he is convinced that evil people throughout the world are working to defeat this glorious hope of mankind. Those evil people may launch an all-out attack on his nation at any moment. His position

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as promoter of mankind's only salvation, embattled and circled by vicious enemies, but inevitably victorious, certainly encourages a self-sacrificing spirit. Minimized in his life are some of the capitalistic elements so conducive to egoism: economic competition, advertising, and conspicuous consumption.

But have these conditions, in addition to the constant exhortations to altruism, actually resulted in increased levels of altruism in communist countries? Chinese Marxists would answer that the re-introduction of capitalism in Russia has caused a great surge of egoism in that country and made it almost indistinguishable from fully capitalist countries. Chinese reports on their own country present a picture of the masses united in zeal for the success of the revolution and the welfare of the proletariat masses. Even after discounting much of this as exaggerated propaganda, we are left with the undeniable fact that in less than a quarter of a century, Marxist leadership has transformed China from an under-developed, dependent, strife-torn "nation of coolies" into a vibrant power that is regarded either with reverence or fear by the entire world. Formerly, everyone looked patronizingly on China, today no one does. Even its enemies must concede that China has made gigantic strides in eliminating banditry, crime, drug traffic, illiteracy, destitution and inequality. Even allowing for the effectiveness of organization and stern repressive measures, such unprecedented progress is a tribute to increased social altruism

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in the form of devotion, self-sacrifice and co-operation. With modifications, the Marxist impact has been the same on Russia and Cuba. It seems to this humble observer, willing to be shown the error of his ways, that Marxism not only preaches social altruism but has been successful in realizing it in the revolutionary masses.

Finally, a concession to Marxist altruism in China from a most unusual source. The Vatican "Department of Missions," the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, while not endorsing all aspects of the Chinese system, does concede that communist China "looks toward the mystique of disinterested work for others, to inspiration to justice, to exaltation of a simple and frugal life, to rehabilitation of the rural masses and to a mixing of the social classes."[1]

To whom does Marxist altruism extend?

The effectiveness of the Marxist demand that the individual altruistically give up his own selfish interests in order to put first the interests of the revolution, of the Party, and of the proletariat, is shown by the success of Marxism in gaining the ascendency over the lives of a billion people in the last sixty years. Does this successful encouragement to altruism also extend to the comrade's treatment of his fellow citizens? He is urged to devote himself unselfishly to the success of the revolution; is he also urged to kindly helping behavior toward the fellow Marxist who lives

[1]"Turning the Other Cheek," Time, April 30, 1973, p. 97.

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next door? All the examples of helping behavior which I found praised in the Peking Review were in context of advancement of the revolution--heroes and heroines lauded for their sacrifices in helping fellow fighters battling against the Kuomintang bandits, against Japanese imperialists, against Soviet fascist revisionists, etc. Praise of purely personal kindnesses, for instance, treating elderly people with respect, giving up part of one's food ration to help a sick person, etc., did not appear in the articles which I read. Inasmuch as the criterion for morality is, as Lenin and the Peking Review have stressed, the degree to which behavior contributes to the success of the revolution, such purely personal altruisms have at best a marginal value. Indeed, such a concern for the welfare of the next person might seem to open the door to a Mao-condemned "small group mentality," i.e., forgetting the interests of the revolution in an excessive concern for the welfare of one's neighbor. On the other hand, although a purely personal concern for the welfare of the neighbor does not seem to be an integral part of Marxist doctrine, inevitably some such concern will arise as a spin-off from the sense of identification that Marxism seeks to build among its adherents. That sense of being a comrade, a fellow-fighter for the cause, will naturally lead to a feeling of warmth and helpfulness. And, additionally, whoever contributes to the welfare of a fellow-fighter is contributing to the welfare of the cause.

The rationale for the very existence of Marxist

altruism also specifies its extension. A Marxist should be concerned for the welfare of those who are contributing to the proletarian class-struggle. The success of the revolutions is the standard by which to judge the goodness or evil of persons, behavior, events and things. A person is worthy of respect to the extent that he has contributed, is contributing, or probably will contribute to the success of the revolution.

As for the enemy of the revolution, what rationale exists for extending altruism to him? Actually, such sentimentalism would be contrary to the interests of the proletariat, would be counter-revolutionary. Certainly no revered Marxist leader has encouraged any such illogical sentimental altruism.

But is there not still a humanist basis for altruism, an identification even with the enemy on the basis of a common human nature? Let us hark back to Karl Marx' doctrine on human nature: "But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations."[1] Stalin cites Marx's words in the same vein: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being determines their consciousness."[2]

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[1]Karl Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy, n.ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1946), p. 60.

[2]Joseph Stalin, Dialectical and Historical Materialism (New York: International Publishers, 1940), p. 21.

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If human essence is the ensemble of social relations, and two men have radically different relations to society it would seem to follow that they have radically different "human essences." What basis then exists for any identification between the two which can foster altruism? If it is man's social being which determines his consciousness, there exists an inalterable opposition between the proletariat man and the bourgeois man. Chairman Mao spells out the same theme in more detail:

> Is there any such thing as human nature? Of course there is. But there is only human nature in the concrete, no human nature in the abstract. In class society there is only human nature of a class character; there is no human nature above classes. We uphold the human nature of the proletariat and of the masses of the people, while the landlord and bourgeois classes uphold the human nature of their own classes, only they do not say so but make it out to be the only human nature in existence.[1]

Taking his cue from Mao's words above, the author of an article in the Peking Review goes on to denounce the theory that men have a common human nature and common feelings:

> Revisionist writers preach that a typical character "first of all is a man" and "has things common to mankind"; they advocate using "the attitude of respecting and sympathizing with others" in the quest for "true men," "true hearts" and "true feelings." They describe all this as "common feelings of human beings" and babble that if we concentrate and generalize such "common feelings" we shall be able to concentrate and generalize life and portray "true men with human nature." Citing many facts showing that "the joys and sorrows of human beings are not alike," Lu Hsun scathingly refutes this fallacy.[2]

Revisionist writers advocate respect and sympathy

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[1]Su Hsi, "The Struggle Between the Theory of Classes and the Theory of Human Nature in Literature and Art," Peking Review, June 9, 1972, p. 5.

[2]Ibid., p. 6.

for others, presumably even class enemies, on the basis of common human nature. The orthodox Marxist author in the Peking Review quite logically denounces this as fallacy. Altruism for class enemies strikes at what may well be the most basic axiom in Marxist thought, its doctrine of human nature.

This doctrine that there is no common human nature,[1] but that human nature only exists in the concrete, and dependent upon the class of the possessor, gives an added dimension of literal meaning to the epithets used in the Peking Review to describe class enemies: "devils in human skin," monsters, freaks, ghosts, demons. Only the proletariat, and those who, although not born proletariat, have become so by identification, can qualify as truly human.

Disagreement about human nature seems to have been a major cause of the bloody Cultural Revolution of the 1960's, in which so many thousands lost their lives. From various articles in the Peking Review one pieces together the picture that the Cultural Revolution was "personally initiated and led by Chairman Mao"[2] in order to smash "Liu Shao-chi's counter-revolutionary and revisionist line and the sinister

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[1]The Maoists would surely concede, with Karl Marx, that all men have the same fixed drives for sex and food, although even this meager communality of human nature is not mentioned.

[2]"Revolutionary Soviet People Will Rise Up to Overthrow the Reactionary Rule of Kremlin's New Tsars," Peking Review, February 9, 1968, p. 21.

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literary and art line of Chou Yang and others."[1]

As the starting point of their theorizing, these revisionists took Confucius' theory that "by nature men are nearly alike." Because of the common nature of men, Confucius advocated that the benevolent man should love all men, and "what you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others."[2] Confucius spread these "reactionary theories" in order to neutralize the slaves' hostility toward their masters, and thus to suppress revolution and perpetuate the slave system.

As early as the 1930's Liu Shao-chi and other "sham Marxists" began to promote Confucius' theories:

> They raved that "we should have things common to mankind and we cannot have an over-rigid view on classes." They called on writers to write about "common human nature" and reflect "the common interests of all mankind," and so on and so forth.[3]

And as noted in a previous citation, these revisionist writers urged an attitude of respecting and sympathizing with others, based on the fact that all men have the same human nature. Sympathy for bourgeoisie,and the theory of a common human nature was in sharp opposition to the

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[1]Wen Chun, "Uphold the Marxist Theory of Classes, Criticize the 'Theory of Human Nature,'" Peking Review, July 30, 1971, p. 13.

[2]Writing Group of the Shantung Provincial Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, "A Criticism of Confucius' Thinking on Education," Peking Review, September 17, 1971, p. 8.

[3]Wen Chun, "Uphold Marxist Theory," p. 9.

orthodox line that literature and art must present the distinctive human nature characteristic of the revolutionary proletariat, namely an attitude of heroic self-sacrifice for the good of the revolution. The Confucian theory, so strongly denounced by the Peking Review, has far-reaching political and artistic implications:

> Two diametrically opposed political lines and literary and art lines emanate from the Marxist theory of classes and from the landlord and capitalist classes' theory of human nature, and this inevitably leads to a struggle between the two lines.[1]

The Confucian theory of a common human nature has been the basis for the revisionist policies of Khruschov and "China's Khruschov," Liu Shao-chi:

> So in the 50's and 60's, again proceeding from the theory of human nature, they came forth with the theory of "literature and art for the whole people" which was nothing but an out-and-out revisionist fallacy suited to the needs of the counter-revolutionary revisionist political line and based on such absurdities of Khruschov and Liu Shao-chi as "state of the entire people" and the theory of "the dying out of the class struggle." . . .
>
> After victory was gained in the democratic revolution they again proceeded from the reactionary theory of human nature and pushed the counter-revolutionary revisionist line, opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat, and carried out activities to restore capitalism. Special attention should be paid to the fact that the theory of human nature is even more harmful in the period of the dictatorship of the proletariat. From it not only directly arise a Right opportunist line and an ultra-"Left" line or one that is "Left" in form but Right in essence. From it also directly arises the revisionist theory for restoring capitalism and serving the exploiting classes.[2]

The Marxist doctrine of human nature, although mentioned only in passing by the Marxist greats, and never worked

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[1]Wen Chun, "Uphold Marxist Theory," p. 10.

[2]Ibid., p. 11.

out in detail, as far as I have been able to discover, proves to be of vast importance in the over-all Marxist picture. It effectively limits Marxist altruism to people having a revolutionary consciousness, and therefore members, at least in sympathy, of the proletariat class. Only these have the proletariat human nature, the full human nature, and thus only with these does the bond of identification, that is necessary for altruism, exist. Reinforcing this is the fact that Marxist morality stems from the needs of the revolution, and altruism for class enemies would be counter-productive.

Further key importance of the doctrine of human nature is emphasized in Wen chun's article, cited above. He condemns the theory of a common human nature, referred to simply as "the theory of human nature," as being the source of the revisionist errors. This hateful "liberal and humanist theory of human nature" has, according to Wen Chun, led to the conclusion that a Marxist should have sympathy for all men, has led to a false literary approach, and finally has led to the egoistic theory of increasing incentive by giving material compensations, which in turn would have fostered the reintroduction of capitalism. These were the trends which the Great Cultural Revolution successfully smashed.

Proper attitude toward class enemies

The proper attitude toward class enemies is revealed in various articles in the Peking Review. Heroine Wang Hsiu-chen is presented for emulation.

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> She loved her class brothers and has nothing but hatred for the class enemies. . . . [she] patiently told the worker masses: "When we of the working class consider or handle a problem, we must put the interests of the Party, of the revolution and of the proletarian class in first place. We must never treat comrades the way we treat our enemies."[1]

Lamenting the restoration of capitalism in Russia, but predicting the inevitable demise of that regime of revisionists, the article "Loss of Political Power Means Loss of Everything" states:

> We are deeply convinced that the Soviet working class and other labouring people, with intense class hatred and heightened revolutionary spirit, will wage an unremitting struggle to defend the proletarian revolutionary cause of the great Lenin and Stalin.[2]

Wang Kuo-hsiang, whose company won a Collective Order of Merit, First Class, "for defeating the Soviet revisionist aggressor troops," proudly proclaims: "All our fighters hold the Soviet revisionists in deep hatred and contempt."[3]

Denouncing the revisionist, counter-revolutionary line in medicine and health advocated by "China's Khruschov," Hsu Tao-yi states:

> Our section's Party branch ran a Mao Tse-Tung Thought study class to vigorously expose and criticize Liu Shao-chi's towering crimes. This aroused the comrades' deep

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[1] "Wang Hsiu-chen," p. 24.

[2] "Loss of Political Power Means Loss of Everything," Peking Review, May 10, 1968, p. 27.

[3] "Fearing Neither Hardship Nor Death--Spiritual A-Bomb for Burying Imperialism, Revisionism and Reaction," Peking Review, June 20, 1969, p. 16.

hatred for Liu Shao-chi.[1]

The proper attitude toward Soviet revisionists, who unavailingly protest that they are genuine Marxists, sincere communists and true comrades, was shown by the Kunming masses: "Filled with hatred for the enemy, more than 300,000 armymen and civilians in Kunming took to the streets in a powerful demonstration."[2]

At another mass demonstration a few months later, again denouncing Soviet leaders, "united as one, they gave the reins to their hatred for the enemy."

A quote from Mao encapsulates, and no doubt inspired, the entire thrust of the Peking Review articles for the five year period I studied them: "Hate the enemy, love the people; destroy self-interest, promote the public interest, dedicate oneself to the revolutionary struggle."[3]

"Intense class hatred," "deep hatred and contempt," "nothing but hatred." This is the proper Maoist Marxist attitude, faithfully following Karl Marx, for class enemies, reactionaries and revisionists.

Motivations for Marxist altruism

We have seen that the concepts of identification with

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[1]Hsu Tao-yi, "Serve the People Heart and Soul," Peking Review, June 13, 1969, p. 10.

[2]"Hundreds of Millions of Armymen and Civilians Throughout China Angrily Denounce Soviet Revisionist Armed Provocation," Peking Review, March 7, 1969, p. 11.

[3]"Mao Tse-Tung's Thought--The Invincible Weapon," Peking Review, July 21, 1967, p. 31.

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others and of self-realization were offered by Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity to their adherents as motivations for helping behavior toward others. The theme of identification is also strong in Marxism. The very idea of eliminating class distinctions is a call to unity in one class. Marxist leaders urge their people to a unity of purpose in working for the success of the revolution. There are few things more suited to strengthen a sense of unity and identification than the constant theme of "it's us versus them, in a battle to the death!" It is the "enlightened, courageous proletariat fighters against the corrupt forces of capitalism and revisionism, in a war for survival which we will inevitably win!" The sense of embattled crisis, but with victory in sight, forges a strong identification with fellow-fighters for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The theme of self-realization, a motivation for altruism in religion, is denounced by Maoist Marxism. "Fight self!" is Mao's command to the masses. The advice of former president Liu Shao-chi that a communist should love himself and protect his own life and health is scathingly denounced as revisionist and bourgeois drivel. His book Self-Cultivation is regarded as "sinister," and a support for the forces of reaction. Its theme (judging from mention of it in the Peking Review) is remarkably similar to Abraham Maslow's basic theory: human nature is good, and the individual should attune himself to its inmost whisperings in order to guide himself to full self-realization. Liu

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Shao-chi drew from the teachings of Mencius, a disciple (two hundred years later) of Confucius.

> According to Mencius' idealist theory of knowledge, since man was good by nature, it was necessary to avoid being influenced by the outside world by working hard to examine oneself subjectively if such "good" nature was to be preserved and developed. Mencius held that "sincerity" was a spiritual principle laid down by heaven and the correct way for men to follow was to do their best to be "sincere." One must unceasingly "examine oneself" and try hard in quest of the "traces of goodness" inherent in one's mind and make it grow. "Utmost sincerity" could make one communicate with "heaven." Once this highest state of mind was reached, a ruler would become a "sage," a "divine soul" with "every principle in my mind" and the ruled would consciously "subject" themselves to his rule. All this was nothing but an attempt to prove philosophically the "eternal" existence of the slave system and that the restoration of the slave system was "natural and rational." This whole set of "self-cultivation" with "sincerity" as its core preached by Mencius was extremely vicious and poisonous, so much so that all representatives of the reactionary classes and revisionist ringleaders inside the Party such as Chiang Kai-shek, Liu Shao-chi and Lin Piao treasured it, regarding it as the foundation for "building up a state" and the "motive force" for their counter-revolutionary activities.[1]

This doctrine that human nature is good and thus can be a guide for conduct sets up a norm for behavior which is independent of and competing with Party decrees:

> Lin Piao also made big efforts to peddle this Confucian "self-examination" method of cultivation and advocated that "if you want to solve problems, you should let revolution break out in the innermost part of your soul." According to this absurd remark, one's knowledge can be acquired and world outlook remoulded without taking part in the practice of the three great revolutionary movements and without studying Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-Tung Thought, and these can be achieved simply by "outbreaks in the innermost part of your soul." Here

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[1]Tien Li, "Mencius--A Trumpeter for Restoring the Slave System," Peking Review, September 13, 1974, p. 15.

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> Lin Piao sang the same refrain as Liu Shao-chi did in his sinister book Self-Cultivation. By spreading this reactionary philosophy, Lin Piao tried to lead the masses astray on to the road of "self-cultivation behind a closed door" so they would forget the Party's basic line and become docile tools of the bourgeoisie.[1]

Self-realization as proposed by Liu Shao-chi is also denounced as leading to the inacceptable idea of benevolence and love toward class enemies:

> In his sinister book Self-Cultivation, soaked in Confucian and Mencian poison, Liu Shao-chi told Communists to learn so-called "loyalty and forbearance" and "reply to wrong with virtue" and "exercise benevolence and love" towards the capitalist class and not exercise the dictatorship of the proletariat. Lin Piao also waved the phoney flag of "benevolence, righteousness and virtue" when he frenziedly attacked the dictatorship of the proletariat as a "meat grinder" and howled that "he who relies on virtue will thrive and he who relies on force will perish," and made a hullabaloo about "benevolence, righteousness and virtue" and so forth.[2]

This Maoist condemnation of self-cultivation is based on the fact that it takes its origins from a source independent of Party decrees, and leads to conclusions contrary to those decrees. However, the Maoists propose their own variety of self-realization, without using those words. The ideal of self-realization which they hold up for the faithful is the zealous fighter for the revolution, who has submerged his own interests for the Party welfare. Thus Marxism, as well as the religions we have considered, proposes self-realization through self-denial, although a different

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[1] Hung Kwang-szu, "Criticize the Doctrines of Confucius and Mencius to Consolidate the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," Peking Review, April 18, 1975, p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 5.

type of self-realization and a different type of self-denial. The Maoists stimulate the altruistic self-denial of the masses by using literature and art to portray the exploits of self-sacrificial Marxist heroes and heroines:

> Our great leader Chairman Mao has taught us: "Revolutionary literature and art should create a variety of characters out of real life and help the masses to propel history forward." What stands out as a remarkable achievement in the model revolutionary Peking opera Taking Tiger Mountain by Strategy is the conspicuous success in the portrayal of Yang Tzu-jung, a typical example of new proletarian heroes. The name Yang Tzu-jung, which in the last few years has become the personification of proletarian loyalty, courage and wisdom, has taken deep root in the hearts of the broad masses of workers, peasants and soldiers. "A Communist always heeds the Party's call, he takes the heaviest burden on himself"; "Let the red flag fly all over the world, be there seas of fire and a forest of knives, I'll charge ahead"; "Standing in the cold and melting the ice and snow, I've the morning sun in my heart"; these and other noble words of Yang Tzu-jung have become watchwords heightening the fighting will of the revolutionary people, and today are on the lips of the workers, pessants and soldiers. The image of the proletarian hero Yang Tzu-jung glitters with the brilliance of Mao Tse-Tung Thought; it has become a tremendous spiritual force inspiring the revolutionary people in their march forward.[1]

Thus, the masses are inspired to altruistic behavior in favor of the Cause by inculcating in them an ideal self-image which they strive to bring to fulfillment.

Marxism has another motive inducing to altruistic behavior in those living under its rule, which is not possessed by the religions we have considered. The citizen of a Marxist country realizes that his tenure and advancement in

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[1]Hung Cheng, "To Find Men Truly Great and Noble-Hearted We Must Look Here in the Present," Peking Review, January 16, 1970, p. 17.

his job depends to a large extent on his willingness to sacrifice his personal interests for the interests of the Party. Thus, ultimately his material welfare, his reputation and his acceptance by others is tied up intimately with his willingness to devote himself to the service of the revolution. Backing up the state's demands upon him for altruistic behavior is the ultimate authority of the gun, which Mao says is the source of all power. "All power flows from the barrel of the gun."

Conclusion

We have seen that Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism do encourage altruistic conduct by their adherents. As incentives to altruism they offer, in various forms, a sense of identification with others, and present an ideal self-image to the adherent, which image includes an altruistic life style. We have seen that these factors of self-realization and identification are at root desires for an increased awareness of good possessed by self or by the extended self.

An additional motivation, not explicitly urged by these ideologies, is the adherents' desire to maintain a good self-image as a faithful follower of their particular ethical code. The desire for social approval will also be a motivation urging to altruistic behavior.

Summary of Chapter V

Self-love motivates all that we do. Self-love is

twofold: desire for good to be possessed by self, and secondly, taking pleasure in the awareness of good already possessed by self. Self-love is not to be equated with selfishness. When self-love moves us to conduct that is in callous disregard for the welfare of others, this is selfishness. But self-love is also the root force behind our identification with others and concern for their welfare.

A perceived similarity to self can lead us to regard other persons as a sort of extended self, with the result that we desire good for the other as we do for self, although usually to a lesser degree. To the extent that we identify with the other, his joys and sorrows are our joys and sorrows, his acquisition of good is our acquisition of good. I have a benign feeling for him because, somehow, he is like me. The mother's love for her child is a classic example of this principle of identification.

The percieved similarity leading to a sense of indentification may be a matter of blood kinship, of shared interests and attitudes, of race, of appearance, etc., or even merely of membership in the class of living beings. The breadth and depth of a person's identification with others is one measure of nobility of character.

That all of our behavior is self-oriented is confirmed by the psychological systems of Freud, Adler, Maslow, Skinner, Plato and Aristotle.

Contemporary theories proposed by social psychologists offer several explanations for altruistic behavior, explana-

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tions not intended to be mutually exclusive. One theorist offers evidence to indicate that helping behavior is motivated by the agent's desire to placate a guilty conscience, another maintains that the motivation is a desire to raise self-esteem that has been lowered by some mishap or misdeed. Some other explanations: helping behavior arises from the agent's desire to relieve negative affect; from an overflow of a feeling of elation; from a desire to restore equity to a social relationship; from projection (identification); from transferred aggression. None of these studies suggest that helping behavior is due to "total altruism"--a desire for the welfare of the recipient , quite apart from any reflex relationship to self.

Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism offer the motivations of identification and self-realization to their adherents in urging them to altruistic behavior. These are ultimately matters of self-image enhancement.

CHAPTER VI

AGGRESSION, ANGER, AND SELF-ESTEEM

Introduction

The problem of human aggression is one of the central themes in psychology today. What are the root causes for man's inhumanity to man--is man naturally cruel and violent, as Freud proposes, or is he naturally kind and benign as Rousseau's "noble savage" theory maintains, a gospel carried on by the Enlightenment and such latter-day apostles as Ashley Montague. What is the most effective solution to the crime explosion America has witnessed in the last few years? How can we forestall another world war with its inevitable nuclear holocaust? These questions have given rise to an increasing amount of psychological research and philosophical speculation in the last few years.

> Over the past two decades human aggression has attracted the attention of growing numbers of psychologists. While this attraction is part of a general interest in the scientific study of human behavior, it is also the result of a desire to discover in exact behavioral terms the causes and possible cures for what is rapidly becoming a serious social issue of the late twentieth century. Indeed, as we look forward in the 1970's to what may be another decade of guerilla war, counterinsurgency, urban revolts, terrorism, crime, and constant threat of total destruction, the issues of aggression and violence assume mammoth proportions. The magnitude of the problem cannot be denied; the question psychologists must ask is whether psychology can tell

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us anything important about it.[1]

The same concern, with issues specified, is expressed by Edwin Megargee, professor of psychology at Florida State University:

> Are children born aggressive or do they learn to behave aggressively during their early development? Does viewing a violent television show make a child more or less aggressive? Do contact sports and interschool rivalries drain off aggressive energy that might otherwise lead to violent crime or do they foster aggressive habits? To decrease violent crime should a large city increase the size of its police department or its welfare department? Does stockpiling a massive arsenal of strategic weapons prevent war or make it inevitable? The psychological theories that have been proposed to explain aggression and violence diverge so sharply from one another that behavioral scientists would disagree on each and every one of the questions above. And yet our very survival as a species may depend on our ability to resolve issues such as these.[2]

Theories about the basic sources of human aggressiveness and violence can be grouped into three principal categories. First, the view that man has an innate instinct to inflict harm on others. This seems to have been a prevalent view in pre-Christian antiquity. A reading of ancient history and literature finds violence on every page--wars, rebellions, massacres, enslavements, treachery, and murder seem to be the stuff of which human relations are made. Plutarch, the great biographer of "noble" Greeks and Romans, writing about 120 A.D., expresses a common sentiment in

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[1]Russell G. Geen, Aggression (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1972), p. 1.

[2]Edwin I. Megargee, The Psychology of Violence and Aggression (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1972), p. 1.

commenting on the agreement between Marc Anthony, Lepidus, and Octavian (who later gave the world 30 [?] years of peace as Augustus Caesar) to divide the power of the Roman Empire between them, with the stipulation that each allow some of his relatives and friends to be assassinated by the other two of the triumvirate:

> Thus united, they made a schedule of above two hundred persons who were to be put to death. But the greatest contention in all their debates was on the question of Cicero's case. Antony would come to no conditions, unless he should be the first man to be killed. Lepidus held with Antony, and Caesar opposed them both. They met secretly and by themselves, for three days together, near the town of Bononia. The spot was not far from the camp, with a river surrounding it. Caesar, it is said, contended earnestly for Cicero the first two days; but on the third day he yielded, and gave him up. The terms of their mutual concessions were these: that Caesar should desert Cicero, Lepidus his brother Paulus, and Antony, Lucius Caesar, his uncle by his mother's side. Thus they let their anger and fury take from them the sense of humanity, and demonstrated that no beast is more savage than man, when possessed with power answerable to his rage.[1]

This view that aggression and cruelty is innate to man was reinforced by Old and New Testament passages which support the view that "the heart of man is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things."

In modern times Freud has developed the same theme, adding a few touches of his own. For him, man is not only by nature a murderer, but also cannibalistic and incestuous. In recent years famed ethologist Konrad Lorenz has extrapolated from his studies of fauna to the conclusion that man

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[1]Plutarch, Plutarch's Lives (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), 12: 265.

has an innate aggressive instinct, an urge which builds up and must be discharged in some aggressive activity. Robert Ardrey (African Genesis and The Territorial Imperative) and Desmond Morris (The Naked Ape and The Human Zoo) have expanded upon and popularized the ideas of Lorenz and the findings of Leakey.

Over the past two hundred years a second theory has been gaining ascendancy--man's inhumanity to man does not arise from his basic nature but from nurture. The impulse to injure one's fellow man is not innate, but is learned from others or is the result of the warping influence of a bad environment. This view is sometimes part of the Enlightenment mystique that man is basically good by nature, and sometimes is derived from the view that man's nature is at birth a tabula rasa, to be totally shaped by his environment.

In the past few years the frustration theory of aggression has gained some currency in psychological circles. The authors of this theory explicitly disclaim taking sides in the nature/nurture controversy, and propose that aggression arises in response to some frustration imposed on the organism. We will discuss this theory more in detail in this chapter.

Freud's Theory of Aggression

> There is no use in trying to get rid of men's aggressive inclinations . . . if these forces are turned to

> destruction in the external world, the organism will be relieved and the effect must be beneficial.[1]

The above quote, encapsulating Freud's views on human aggression, explains why some intellectuals today, casting desperately about for a solution to man's inhumanity to man, find Freud's views "frightening" and "potentially malignant."[2]

Freud did not bring his theory on aggression to full flowering until relatively late in his career, with the publication of Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920). The message of this work is that in each of us there is a "death instinct," innate and operative throughout our lives. We all have an unconscious urge to bring about our own death, but only in the way and at the time chosen by ourselves, unconsciously. Death at any other time or any other way we resist strenuously.

> "The goal of all life is death." . . . It remains to be added that the organism is resolved to die only in its own way. . . . Hence the paradox comes about that the living organism resists with all its energy influences (dangers) which could help it to reach its life-goal by a short way. . . .[3]

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Why War?, in The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1964), 22: 211.

[2]Michael S. Gazzaniga and others, "Violent Man," Psychology Today, June 1969, pp. 52-63.

[3]Sigmund Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman (Garden City: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), p. 160.

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This idea of a death instinct represents a radical new development in Freud's thought. Previously he had maintained that all human behavior could be explained by two sets of instincts, the sexual instincts and the ego instincts (self-preservation instincts, including hunger and thirst). With the discovery of the death instinct, Freud revises his dichotomy of instincts into life instincts (including sexual instincts and ego instincts) and death instincts.

> Our hypothesis is that there are two essentially different classes of instincts, understood in the widest sense--Eros, if you prefer that name--and the aggressive instincts, whose aim is destruction.[1]

The death instinct, when directed toward external objects, expresses itself as an instinct for aggressive behavior, as a "destructive" instinct. But when for any reason it is unable to vent itself upon external objects, the aggressivity turns inward upon the organism itself.

> And now we are struck by the significance of the possibility that the aggressiveness may not be able to find satisfaction in the external world because it comes up against real obstacles. If this happens, it will perhaps retreat and increase the amount of self-destructiveness holding sway in the interior. We shall hear how this is in fact what occurs and how important a process this is. Impeded aggressiveness seems to involve a grave injury. It really seems as though it is necessary for us to destroy some other thing or person in order not to destroy ourselves, in order to guard against the impulsion to self-destruction. A sad disclosure indeed for the moralist![2]

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Anxiety and the Instinctual Life, in New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 103.

[2]Ibid., p. 105.

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This seemingly harsh idea that aggressiveness is not only innate in human nature but should be expressed for the health of the individual is repeated in other writings of Freud. In An Outline of Psychoanalysis he says "Holding back aggressiveness is in general unhealthy and leads to illness."[1] And in Why War?:

> The death instinct turns into the destructive instinct when, with the help of special organs, it is directed outwards, on to objects. The organism preserves its own life, so to say, by destroying an extraneous one.[2]

Do we have here a theory that can be offered as a rationale for the view that wars are not only inevitable, but even psychologically beneficial for the millions of "organisms" involved? Freud considers himself "constitutionally a pacifist," and certainly is not happy with the apparent support his theories offer to the "war is inevitable" position. In his response Why War? to Albert Einstein's letter of entreaty to "present the problem of world peace in the light of your most recent discoveries, for such a presentation well might blaze the trail for new and fruitful modes of action,"[3] Freud attempts to offer somewhat optimistic hopes for the eventual elimination of war.

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[1]Sigmund Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, trans. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1949), p. 22.

[2]Freud, Why War?, p. 211.

[3]Ibid., p. 202. Einstein expresses in this letter a view similar to Freud's. He asks how it is possible that the machinations of the ruling classes can arouse in mankind a wild enthusiasm for war, and concludes: "Only one answer is possible. Because man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction." Ibid., p. 201.

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The answer does not lie in eliminating man's aggressive instincts--"there is no use in trying to get rid of man's aggressive inclinations." He mentions that the Russian Communists believe that they can "cause human aggressiveness to disappear" by means of providing sufficiently for the basic needs of all, and by eliminating inequality. But this Freud believes is an illusory hope, and remarks that the Russian leaders keep their people united by playing upon their aggressive instincts and "hatred of everyone beyond their frontiers."[1]

Freud briefly toys with the possibility that unification ("identification") of the human race through a common ideology might bring world peace. However, he admits that this does not seem to be the answer, because historically the ideology of Panhellenism did not prevent war among the Greek city states, although it did have some mitigating influences. Nor did the near-universal Catholicism of medieval Europe prevent wars between Catholic states. He comments that some people today are inclined to pin their hopes for world peace upon the triumph of a world-wide Communist ideology. This possibility Freud considers to be a very remote one, and possibly attainable only after the "most fearful civil wars."[2]

Despite his reservations, the concept of eliminating war through unification of mankind by identification of

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[1]Ibid., p. 212. [2]Ibid., p. 208.

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feelings, ideas and interests is one ray of hope that Freud offers. How this can be carried out practically he admits is beyond his scope as a theoretician.

He adds the further suggestion that Eros can be used to combat Mars. Man's basic erotic instincts can be called into play to control his basic aggressive instincts. The erotic instincts (sexual instincts and ego instincts, and their spin-off, brotherly love) tend to unite men. Further elaboration on how this can be done, he leaves to others.

Finally he suggests that the "ideal condition" would be the development of a class of leaders with independent minds and eager in the pursuit of truth who had "subordinated their instinctual life to the dictatorship of reason."[1] These leaders would then presumably act to curb war. But he admits that this is in all probability a "Utopian expectation."

Freud is not at all sanguine about the slim glimpse of optimism he offers for the elimination of war, and confesses humbly that "the result, as you see, is not very fruitful when an unworldly theoretician is called in to advise on an urgent practical problem."[2]

Inasmuch as Freud is "constitutionally a pacifist" can we take hope from the possibility that one day all men will share his viewpoint? He believes that evolution will one day bring us to this point, but only at some unforeseeable

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[1]Ibid., p. 213. [2]Ibid.

time in the future. Why is Freud constitutionally a pacifist? Because he represents the leading edge of cultural evolution, which moves in the direction of dominance of intellect over instinctual impulses.[1] This dominance does not eliminate the instinctual impulses, erotic and aggressive, but represses and internalizes them. This silver cloud has a grey lining, however, because the internalizing of the aggressive impulses, while it may eliminate war, will, as Freud has already emphasized, be unhealthy for the individual organism. Freud closes his letter to Einstein on a note that is optimistic to the extent that we can forget his previous remarks and his ambiguous feelings toward civilization itself: "But one thing we can say: whatever fosters the growth of civilization works at the same time against war."[2]

Why did Freud conclude to a death instinct?

In Anxiety and the Instinctual Life Freud poses the rhetorical question as to why it took him so long to recognize the existence of the aggressive (death) instinct when there is so much evidence for it. He answers that the proposal of such an instinct in human nature arouses the opposition of many people who think that it "should be got rid of as quickly as possible."[3] The idea of an aggressive instinct in man is unpopular because it contradicts the popular mystique that man is basically good. This belief in

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[1]Ibid., p. 214. [2]Ibid., p. 215.

[3]Freud, Anxiety and the Instinctual Life, p. 103.

the goodness of human nature is, according to Freud, an evil illusion which causes damage.

> We should probably have met with little resistance if we had wanted to ascribe an instinct with such an aim to animals. But to include it in the human constitution appears sacrilegious; it contradicts too many religious presumptions and social conventions. No, man must be naturally good or at least good-natured. If he occasionally shows himself brutal, violent or cruel, these are only passing disturbances of his emotional life, for the most part provoked, or perhaps only consequences of the inexpedient social regulations which he has hitherto imposed on himself.
>
> Unfortunately what history tells us and what we ourselves have experienced does not speak in this sense but rather justifies a judgment that belief in the 'goodness' of human nature is one of those evil illusions by which mankind expect their lives to be beautified and made easier while in reality they only cause damage.[1]

Probably Freud had shared in this common bias against admitting an evil streak in human nature, and this mind-set prevented him from earlier concluding to an aggressive instinct, for in Civilization and Its Discontents, he says:

> I remember my own defensive attitude when the idea of an instinct of destruction first emerged in psychoanalytic literature, and how long it took before I became receptive to it. That others should have shown, and still show, the same attitude of rejection surprises me less. For 'little children do not like it' when there is talk of the inborn human inclination to 'badness'; to aggressiveness and destructiveness, and so to cruelty as well. God has made them in the image of His own perfection. . . .[2]

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[1] Ibid., pp. 103-4.

[2] Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1961), p. 67.

It is interesting that Freud should blame religion for resisting the idea that man is basically aggressive, whereas Ashley Montague in The Humanization of Man denounces religion for propagating that idea. Both of course are right: traditional religion, Protestant and Catholic, emphasizes an evil aspect in man's nature, whereas liberal religion, as Freud remarked, denies any innate evil in man.

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In Anxiety and the Instinctual Life he offers us a glimpse of the genesis of his new theory of instincts. His observations of masochistic trends in his patients did not seem to fit with his pleasure principle, but rather suggested "the existence of a trend that has self-destruction as its aim." The problem of masochism thus initiated a train of speculation that led him to the conviction that man has a death instinct. "It is only proper if what [masochism] was a stumbling block for the one theory should become the cornerstone of the theory replacing it."[1] However, the existence of masochism was only a small part of the evidence that led him to propose a self-destructive instinct.

> One cannot, after all, venture on a hypothesis of such a wide range merely because a few poor fools have linked their sexual satisfaction to a peculiar condition.[2]

What further evidence is there for a death instinct in man? In the instincts of animals and man we find a "compulsion to repeat," a tendency to "restore an earlier state of things." This tendency Freud also refers to as the "conservative nature of instincts." Illustrative of this are many natural phenomena: the spawning migrations of fishes and the migratory habits of birds, returning to the spot where they were hatched; the healing instinct which recovers health for an injured organism; the regenerating of lost organs by some fauna; embryology (ontogenesis repeats

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[1]Freud, Anxiety and the Instinctual Life, p. 104.

[2]Ibid., p. 106.

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phylogenesis); human reliving of past repressed experiences of childhood; the compulsive repetition of human behavior patterns even when these are to the detriment of the individual.[1] This basic tendency to restore an earlier state of things suggests the existence of an instinct in living things, including man, to return to the inanimate condition that existed before evolution produced life. This instinct in man to return to his previous inanimate state is precisely a death instinct.

> . . . life once proceeded out of inorganic matter, then, according to our presumption, an instinct must have arisen which sought to do away with life once more and to reestablish the inorganic state. If we recognize in this instinct the self-destructiveness of our hypothesis, we may regard the self-destructiveness as an expression of a 'death instinct' which cannot fail to be present in every vital process. And now the instincts that we believe in divide themselves into two groups--the erotic instincts, which seek to combine more and more living substance into ever greater unities, and the death instincts, which oppose this effort and lead what is living back into an inorganic state.[2]

Freud then goes on to further elaborate the clues that first led him to begin his speculations about the death instinct. His new discovery was sparked not only by the observation of sexual masochism previously mentioned, but also by the resistance of patients to the work of analysis. Why should a patient resist the process that would cure him of his mental illness, and which, incidentally, he is paying good money for? Because, unconsciously, the patient wants

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[1]Did an intimation that his compulsive cigar smoking was killing him contribute to Freud's concept of the death wish?

[2]Ibid., p. 107.

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to suffer. He unconsciously feels a need for punishment. This urge to inflict damage upon oneself suggests an instinct in the direction of ultimate self-damage, death.

Some Comments on Freud's Theory of Aggression

Freud has told us the reasoning that led him to conclude to a death instinct--essentially, the observation that in man and animals instinct tends to restore the organism to a previous condition, thus suggesting an instinct to restore the living organism to its ancient condition of inanimate matter. This line of reasoning Freud supported by observations of self-destructive behavior patterns in his patients.

The idea of a death wish was never accepted by the majority of Freud's followers in psychoanalysis, even though they did accept the concept of an innate instinct for external aggression,[1] and speculation ran rife over what was the real reason for his "conversion" to a death instinct. Naturally, some suggested that his grief over the death of his daughter Sophie of influenza in January of 1920 had unduly influenced him. Freud however had foreseen this eventuality and had persuaded his faithful disciple Eitingon to sign a certificate that he had read the half-finished text of Beyond the Pleasure Principle in 1919, several months before it was published, and when Sophie was in perfect

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[1]Erich Fromm, The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1973), p. 36.

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health.[1] Certainly the death of many millions of men, friends and relatives of Freud among them, in the bloodiest war of human history, following, ironically enough, the apogee of a golden period of optimism about progress, civilization and the goodness of human nature, had a deep effect on Freud's outlook. At the close of the war Freud expressed the bleakness of his outlook in a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé: ". . . I am sure that neither I nor my contemporaries will find a happier world. Everything is too horrible."[2] Add to this Freud's preoccupation for many years with the thought of his own demise, and we have fertile soil for the blossoming of a "death instinct" concept.

However, it would be a mistake to thus facilely dismiss his new discovery. Actually it flowed with beautiful logic from his concept of the pleasure principle, the keystone of his psychoanalytic theory. Freud envisioned the instincts as arising from the building up of tension in parts of the body. This tension build-up is felt by the organism as "unpleasure" and urges a discharge of tension, with resulting pleasure. This "pleasure principle" is another way of stating his basic hypothesis that the psychic organism attempts to keep excitation at as low a level as possible, by dispersing concentrations of excitation.

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[1]Marthe Robert, The Psychoanalytic Revolution (New York: Avon Books, 1966), p. 319.

[2]Ibid., p. 309.

> The facts which have caused us to believe in the dominance of the pleasure principle in mental life also find expression in the hypothesis that the mental apparatus endeavours to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant. This later hypothesis is only another way of stating the pleasure principle; for if the work of the mental apparatus is directed towards keeping the quantity of excitation low, then anything that is calculated to increase that quantity is bound to be felt as adverse to the functioning of the apparatus, that is, as unpleasureable. The pleasure principle follows from the principle of constancy; actually the latter principle was inferred from the facts which forced us to adopt the pleasure principle.[1]

Thus we have the basic law governing the organism, the principle of constancy, also referred to by Freud as the Nirvana principle, which is the tendency to disperse concentrations of excitation, or tension, and thus keep the level of excitation as low as possible, or at least constant throughout the system. Freud even speaks of the pleasure principle as aiming to keep the "psychic apparatus" <u>free</u> from excitation.

> The pleasure-principle is then a tendency which subserves a certain function--namely, that of rendering the psychic apparatus as a whole free from any excitation, or to keep the amount of excitation constant or as low as possible.[2]

Rendering the psychic apparatus <u>completely</u> free of excitation, i.e., bringing about death, is only a step further in the same direction. Death is the logical conclusion of the principle of constancy underlying the pleasure

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[1]Freud, <u>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</u>, p.

[2]Ibid., p. 166. For purposes of clarity we might point out that in Freud's usage the pleasure-principle, the constancy principle, and the Nirvana principle are all essentially the same: a tendency for excitation centers to discharge, to diffuse.

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principle. As long as life exists there will be excitation concentrations (brain waves, heart action) in the organism. A constant level of excitation throughout the organism, that is, a stable, even condition, with no excitation concentrations, is only attained when the constant level is zero throughout the organism, i.e., when all life activity ceases.

The same conclusion from Freud's pleasure principle can be reached by considering that the psychic apparatus is an excitation concentration by comparison with its immediate inanimate environment. Complete dispersal of that concentration means attaining a stable level of excitation, constant with that inanimate environment, i.e., a zero level. Thus, following the logic of the pleasure principle leads to the death instinct, which is the urge for a complete diffusion of excitation.

This logical reductio ad mortem is apparent to Erich Fromm, who comments:

> Freud arrives at this point at an almost untenable position; the principles of constancy, inertia, Nirvana, are identical; the principle of tension reduction governs the sexual instinct (in terms of the pleasure principle) and is at the same time the essence of the death instinct.[1]

Freud of course realized that the pleasure principle and the death instinct, as he defined them, are at root the same, both being manifestations of the Nirvana principle. But, as Fromm points out, he could not accept this realization

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[1]Fromm, Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 523.

because it reduced psychic behavior to a single principle.

> Considering that Freud ascribes to the death instinct not only self-destruction but also destruction against others, he would arrive at the paradox that the pleasure principle and the destructive instinct owe their existence to the same principle. Freud, quite naturally, could not be satisfied with such an idea, especially since it would correspond to a monistic rather than the dualistic model of conflicting forces which Freud never gave up.[1]

Such a unity in psychic drive would contradict Freud's basic theory of a dichotomy of instincts and the ensuing psychic warfare between them. This dichotomy was an essential feature of his early thought, when he opposed the ego instincts to the sex instincts, and also in his later theory when he opposed the life instincts to the death instincts. Indeed, a dichotomy of instincts was necessary to explain the constant strife he observed in the mental processes of his patients.

Aware that his logic points to the basic oneness of the pleasure principle and the death instinct, Freud attempts to head off this conclusion and establish a dichotomy between them:

> . . . we must recognize that the Nirvana principle, belonging as it does to the death instinct, has undergone a modification in living organisms through which it has become the pleasure principle; and we shall henceforward avoid regarding the two principles as one . . . . The Nirvana principle expresses the trend of the death instinct; the pleasure principle represents the demands of the libido. . . .[2]

To this Erich Fromm Remarks:

> It seems that this explanation is a theoretical fiat rather than an explanation for the assertion that

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[1]Ibid., p. 523. [2]Ibid., p. 524.

the pleasure principle and the death instinct are not identical.[1]

Despite the fact that the concept of a death instinct flows with impeccable logic from the pleasure principle, as Freud understood it, as a tendency for energy concentrations to disperse, still Freud's followers for the most part could not accept the death instinct. David Bakan comments:

> I might point out parenthetically that the one place where Freud aroused resistance among even his closest associates and most ardent followers was in connection with his notion of the death instinct. Even the defense that the death instinct was unconscious was inadequate to make the full and free entertainment of the notion possible.[2]

Herbert Hendin adds:

> The death instinct violated too many basic observations of biologists and psychologists for it ever to be accepted by them or by more than a small minority of psychoanalysts.[3]

Those followers of Freud who rejected the death instinct would not be forced to reject also the logical antecedent, the pleasure principle. They would need only to question the "energy dispersal" explanation of the pleasure principle, while still retaining the pleasure principle itself.

We agree with the majority who consider that no compelling evidence has been offered to support the idea of

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[1]Ibid.

[2]David Bakan, "Suicide and Immortality," in On the Nature of Suicide, ed. Edwin S. Shneidman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1969), p. 124.

[3]Herbert Hendin, Suicide and Scandinavia (New York: Grune and Stratton, Inc., 1964), p. 11.

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an innate death instinct. However, we do see evidence that some people develop a death wish--suicide is the obvious example. This death wish is usually unconscious, and expresses itself in destructive life styles, in psychosomatic diseases, and in indirect or direct suicide. As we will develop at some length in our chapter on suicide, this death wish is not innate, but arises from a desire to escape from a situation in which the individual is suffering from a lowered self-esteem and sees no hope for regaining that lost self-esteem.

As to Freud's companion theory, that man has an innate instinct for external aggression, we will consider that in this chapter in the section "Does Man Have an Innate Instinct for Aggression?"

Does the Concept of Entropy Sum Up Freud's Entire System?

If one were asked to characterize Freud's ideas in a single word, it seems that the most fitting would not be the popular answer SEX, but rather the austere concept ENTROPY. Entropy, as the reader is well aware, is the second law of thermodynamics.[1] It is the tendency of energy to

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[1]The concept of entropy was proposed in 1850 by Rudolf Clausius, a German physicist. It is sometimes defined as "the measure of the non-availability of energy, in a closed system, for doing work." The entropy in a closed system continues increasing with time, which is to say, the energy concentrations are diffusing toward a constant low energy level throughout the system. Obviously Freud could not have considered the human psyche a closed system, but the key concept, the tendency of an energy concentration to diffuse itself, is valid for an open system as well.

diffuse itself, e.g., heat flow from a warmer to a cooler body, or the diffusion of the kinetic energy of a moving body into friction heat, quickly dissipated. The end product of entropy is a constant level of energy throughout the system, with no energy concentrations remaining. Thus the law of entropy can be described as a principle of constancy: energy in a system tends to reach a level that is constant throughout the system. Similarly, the law of entropy can be described as a principle of stability: energy in a system tends toward a condition of stability, i.e., even diffusion throughout the system. (Energy concentrations represent a condition of instability, tending as they do to diffuse themselves.)

The parallel with Freud's principle of constancy, a "special case of Fechner's principle of the 'tendency toward stability,'" is more than a coincidence of name. Freud has, wittingly or unwittingly, applied the law of entropy to the human psyche. Whether, from the point of view of the physicist, this application is justifiable, is not our concern.

Freud's principle of constancy, that is, his Nirvana principle, he states as:

> . . . an attempt on the part of the psychic apparatus to keep the quantity of excitation present as low as possible, or at least constant . . . . The pleasure-principle is deduced from the principle of constancy . . . a special case of Fechner's principle of the tendency toward stability . . . .[1]

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[1]Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 142.

The psychic organism is pictured as acting to disperse excitation concentrations, and if we substitute "energy" for "excitation," we have the principle of entropy applied to the psychic apparatus. Freud offers us justification for this equivalency when he says:

> We can distinguish an instinct's source, object and aim. It's source is a state of excitation in the body, its aim is the removal of that excitation; on its path from its source to its aim the instinct becomes operative psychically. We picture it as a certain quota of energy which presses in a particular direction. It is from this pressing that it derives its name of 'Trieb.'[1]

Further evidence of the excitation-energy identification in Freud's thought we find in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, where he uses "'bound' and 'unbound' excitation processes" interchangeably with "'bound' and 'unbound' energy processes."[2]

This energy-excitation in the life instincts he has given the name libido:

> Libido is an expression taken from the theory of the emotions. We call by that name the energy (regarded as a quantitative magnitude, though not at present actually mensurable) of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word "love."[3]

Thus Freud's principles of pleasure, of constancy, of stability, and Nirvana, all of them the same in that they are the tendency of energy-excitation concentrations to

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[1]Freud, Anxiety and Instinctual Life, p. 96.

[2]Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, pp. 166-7.

[3]Freud, Group Psychology, p. 177.

discharge, are statements of the law of entropy. Whether Freud, or Fechner, from whom he took this basic idea, consciously intended to apply the law of entropy to the psychic organism is not our concern. True, psychologists and other behavioral scientists do envy the precision, certitude and prestige of the exact sciences and have striven mightily to pattern their own disciplines after the exact sciences wherever possible. But our hypothesis is not critical of Freud in any way; using the principles of one science in another science, wherever truly applicable, is certainly a valid procedure, and praiseworthy rather than to be criticized.

There has been debate in scholarly journals about the validity of the application of the law of entropy to the human psyche, but in this present hypothesis we are not concerned about whether the law of entropy applies to the human psyche, but rather we assert that the law of entropy applies to the human psyche as Freud envisioned it.

However, one difficulty suggests itself. We have seen that this tendency of energy concentrations to diffuse itself is the essence of Freud's pleasure principle and its logical extension, the death instinct. Thus sex and death come under entropy, as Freud conceives of sex and death, but does his concept of "ego instincts" also fall into the same category? In other words, does the pleasure principle apply to the ego instincts, as it does to sex? The question is complicated by the fact that it is not clear in Freud's

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writings just what he includes under the umbrella "ego instincts." We find that he does include hunger and thirst as part of the ego instincts' self-preservative function,[1] and these two urges do operate according to the pleasure-pain principle. From here and there in his writings we can gather evidence that he does envision the ego as operating on the pleasure-pain principle:

> The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings, without taking into account whether they mean to it frustration of sexual satisfaction or of gratification of the needs of self-preservation.[2]

And:

> The pleasure principle however remains for a long time the method of operation of the sex impulses, which are not so easily educable, and it happens over and over again that, whether acting through these impulses or operating in the ego itself, it prevails over the reality principle to the detriment of the organism itself.[3]

And in his last book, The Outline of Psychoanalysis, he says:

> The ego strives after pleasure and seeks to avoid unpleasure.[4]

Thus we come to the conclusion that the instincts which explain all man's behavior, Eros (composed of sex and ego instincts) and the destructive instinct,[5] operate

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[1]Freud, New Introductory Lectures, p. 97.

[2]Freud, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, p. 84.

[3]Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 143.

[4]Freud, The Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 17.

[5]"After long hesitancies and vacillations we have decided to assume the existence of only two basic instincts, Eros and the destructive instinct. (The contrast between

according to the principle of constancy (the tendency of energy/excitation concentrations to diffuse) which is the key concept in the law of entropy. Once again, this conclusion abstracts from the question whether the principle of entropy can be validly applied to the human psyche.

At this point we are not prepared to further speculate as to the significance of this conclusion, except to reiterate that the death instinct, so widely rejected by Freud's followers, is not adventitious to the rest of his thinking, but is logically consistent with it.

As a concluding remark, we want to point out that our own discovery of the fact that both the death instinct and the pleasure principle are based upon entropy is hardly original. Others have commented on it:

> Thus the pleasure principle, which expresses the aim of the instinctual drive, is the psychological equivalent of the entropy principle that all energies are subject to. It regulates the distribution and expenditure of the instinctual drive's energy.[1]

And:

> In this view the death instinct is a kind of personification of the second law of thermodynamics. . . .[2]

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the instincts of self-preservation and the preservation of the species, as well as the contrast between ego-love and object love, fall within Eros.)" Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 19.

[1]David Rapaport, "On the Psychoanalytic Theory of Motivation," in Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1960, p.202.

[2]Anthony Storr, Human Aggression (New York: Atheneum Press, 1968), p. 7.

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Dr. Jekyll or Mr. Hyde?

Sometimes it seems that Freud's concept of man is unrelievedly pessimistic, but, ubiquitous as is the theme of ambivalence in his thinking, it is not surprising to discover a brighter picture he sometimes paints of human nature. We will consider that in a moment, but first let us sketch in its starkness his concept of the natural man, the man who is fully and uninhibitedly following his nature. The prototype for this is the "primal father," a theme which figures frequently in Freud's writings. The primal father is the original man, unwarped by civilization. He is the tyrannical master of a tribe of women and children. As the young men grow to manhood, the primal father kills them or drives them away, in order to keep the power and the women for himself. He is a cannibal. Here then is a man who is truly living according to his human nature, and he is cruel, tyrannical, greedy, a murderer and cannibal. He is fully and effectively satisfying the needs of his id. And it seems hard to escape the conclusion that according to Freud's theory, this is the ideal man. For, concisely summing up the message he has given us throughout his work, Freud in his last book writes:

> The power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs.[1]

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[1] Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 19.

Man's true purpose lies in the id. And what is the id? As Freud tells us, it has no sense of right or wrong, no sense of compassion, only uncontrolled lust for pleasure and destruction. The man who is living according to the true purpose of "the organism" is the ideal man, he is the primal father. But what about the role of the ego, the reality principle, in this picture? The ego's basic function is to act as agent for the id, to insure its maximum satisfaction as far as conditions of reality permit.

> No such purpose as that of keeping itself alive or of protecting itself from dangers by means of anxiety can be attributed to the id. That is the task of the ego, whose business it also is to discover the most favourable and least perilous method of obtaining satisfaction, taking the external world into account.[1]

But fleetingly Freud gives us glimpses of another type of man, with implicit suggestions that this may be the ideal man, the man who is fully living up to his complete human nature. This Dr. Jekyll we can reconstruct from Freud's tribute to ideal qualities which are found in the man in whom the "soft voice of the intellect" has triumphed over the id and super-ego. This man is "the end product of cultural evolution" and a "constitutional pacifist," a scientist, devoted to the search for truth, and impatient of religion in "any form and however attenuated."[2] These are descriptions of his own attitudes which he presents as the

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[1]Ibid., p. 19.

[2]Max Schur, Freud: Living and Dying (New York: International University Press, Inc., 1972), p. 403.

finest flowering of the triumph of the intellect. And, ironically enough, the necessary step in the development of this ideal man who has achieved, or best approximated, this triumph of the intellect, is repression of the instincts. The finest flowering of our nature can only be achieved by repression of instincts, a process that, in the popular mind, seems to be denounced by Freudians without qualification, as the source of our mental ills.

> . . . the restless striving towards further perfection which may be observed in a minority of human beings is easily explicable as the result of that repression of instinct upon which what is most valuable in human culture is built.[1]

It is this repression of his aggressive instinct that has made Freud the constitutional pacifist that he proclaims himself to be. The possibility that the majority of mankind will someday reach this same peak of cultural evolution is the principal hope that he offers Albert Einstein for the elimination of war. The hope for this progressive triumph of the soft voice of reason is the note of optimism on which he closes The Future of an Illusion.

> We may insist as often as we like that man's intellect is powerless in comparison with his instinctual life, and we may be right in this. Nevertheless, there is something peculiar about this weakness. The voice of the intellect is a soft one, but it does not rest till it has gained a hearing. Finally, after a countless succession of rebuffs, it succeeds. This is one of the few points on which one may be optimistic about the future of mankind, but it is in itself a point of no small importance. . . . The primacy of the intellect

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[1]Freud, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, p. 163.

> lies, it is true, in a distant, distant future, but probably not in an infinitely distant one.[1]

Which then, in Freud's thinking, is the true expression of human nature, Mr. Hyde the primal father, or Dr. Jekyll the enlightened scientist? Is this end product of cultural evolution, the man with reason regnant, the man who has so repressed or sublimated his aggressive instincts as to become a constitutional pacifist, is he the truest expression of human nature? Or is the tyrannical murderer and cannibal, the primal father, the truest expression of human nature? One can find ample support in Freud for both positions. And if Dr. Jekyll is the truest expression of human nature, much of the sting is taken out of Freud's doctrine of man's innate destructive instinct. In this light, although it would be flippant to shrug off man's destructive instinct as "it's only a phase he is going through," nevertheless we are left with the vision of man's destructive instinct being neutralized and rendered ineffective by the ultimate triumph of reason. Indeed, since this ultimate triumph comes from man's innate qualities, are we justified in saying that a proper interpretation of Freud requires a revision of his thesis of innate destructive instincts, which revision might read thus: "man has innate destructive tendencies, but in his most basic nature he is peace-loving and reasonable"?

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[1]Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1964), p. 87.

It is not our purpose to attempt to definitively settle the question as to whether Mr. Hyde or Dr. Jekyll is dominant in Freud's depiction of the human psyche; we merely suggest that his conviction concerning the ultimate triumph of the soft voice of the intellect offers a considerable melioration of his stark doctrine of innate human destructiveness.

The Frustration Theory of Aggression

The frustration theory of aggression, developed by a group of Yale University psychologists and first presented in Frustration and Aggression, 1939, has stimulated more empirical research than any other theory of aggression. Over the years many books and articles have been written to support or refute this theory. The authors took their inspiration from the early writings of Freud on aggression, before he adopted the death instinct theory.

> In his earlier writing Freud regarded the tendency to seek pleasure and avoid pain as the basic mechanism of all mental functioning. Frustration occurred whenever pleasure-seeking or pain-avoiding behavior was blocked; aggression was the "primordial reaction" to this state of affairs and was thought of as being originally and normally directed toward those persons or objects in the external world which were perceived as the source of the frustration. Freud dealt with such aberrant phenomena as deliberate self-injury and suicide, not as abrogations of the pleasure-principle, but as instances of aggression "turned inward" under the influence of anxiety (threat of punishment). In this connection he was led to postulate the very important principle of displacement.[1]

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[1] John Dollard, Neal E. Miller, et al., Frustration and Aggression (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), p. 21.

The basic principle in the theory of the Yale group is that "aggression is always a consequence of frustration."[1] Aggression is defined as "an act whose goal-response is injury to an organism (or organism-surrogate)."[2] "Goal-response" is purpose, or as the authors define it "that reaction which reduces the strength of instigation to a degree at which it no longer has as much of a tendency to produce the predicted behavior sequence."[3] Frustration is "that condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference."[4]

A "substitute response" is an alternative goal-response, and may be chosen when the original goal-response is prevented from occurring. Thus, my prime goal-response when I sit down in the restaurant is to eat lobster tail, but when I discover it is not available will settle for a substitute response, eating steak instead.

The authors emphasize that aggression is not always overtly manifested, but may exist as "the content of a phantasy or dream or even a well-thought-out plan of revenge."[5] It may be directed toward the object seen as causing the frustration, or may be displaced to "some altogether innocent source of even toward the self, as in masochism, martyrdom, and suicide." The authors recognize that aggression may be directed toward animals or even inanimate objects (organism surrogates).

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[1]Ibid., p. 1. [2]Ibid., p. 11.

[3]Ibid., p. 6. [4]Ibid., p. 11. [5]Ibid., p. 10.

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The strength of arousal (instigation) to aggression will depend upon three factors: 1) the strength of the original goal-response, 2) the degree of interference with the frustrated response, and 3) the number of frustrated response sequences.[1] As an illustration of the first, my annoyance at not getting lobster tail will be proportionate to the eagerness with which I have been anticipating it. As an example of the second, my coughing at the moment my partner is at a crucial point in his golf swing will annoy him more if his drive turns into a 50-yard dribble than if it merely causes him to hook slightly. Finally, arousal to aggression will be increased as the number of frustrations is increased. The first time that I cough during my golfing partner's swing he may be willing to overlook, but if I make a practice of it his ire is bound to be aroused.

Aggressive responses will be inhibited to the degree that the person expects "punishment" for expressing his aggression. By punishment the authors mean any unpleasant consequence resulting from expression of aggression. Punishment may include injury to a loved object.

"Displacement" is the tendency to vent aggression upon some substitute target when aggression against the perceived author of frustration is inhibited for some reason. The man who is angered by some injustice by his employer but dares not express his anger directly may "take it out" on his wife and children that night.

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[1]Ibid., p. 37.

When direct aggression is inhibited by fear of consequences, changes may occur not only in the object of aggression but also in the form of aggression. Thus, a verbal attack may take the place of a direct physical attack. The authors cite humor and ridicule as common forms of aggressive behavior. Sometimes the aggressor may have to content himself merely with fantasies of revenge upon those responsible for his frustrations.

With regard to self-aggression, the Dollard-Miller theory proposes that inasmuch as aggression is primarily directed toward the one seen as responsible for frustration, self-aggression will be relatively stronger when the source of frustration is perceived to be the self.[1] Also, if aggression toward others is inhibited, it is more likely to be turned against self if self is perceived as the inhibiting agency. Finally, since aggression against self has unpleasant aspects it will only be resorted to when other forms of aggression are strongly inhibited.

Of important practical consequence is the Dollard-Miller conclusion that "the expression of any act of aggression is a catharsis that reduces the instigation to all other acts of aggression."[2] This has led some psychologists to the further conclusion that it is beneficial to a person to "act out" his aggressions in some socially acceptable manner--enjoying the catharsis of spectator sports or TV

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[1]Ibid., p. 48. [2]Ibid., p. 53.

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violence, participating in sports, freely expressing verbal hostility in encounter groups, etc. Such a socially acceptable expression of aggression will "get it out of his system," and will lower the person's general level of hostility. Such a conclusion is controversial. Some studies indicate that such expressions of hostility actually serve to increase the individual's habitual level of hostility. We will consider this issue later in more detail.

As the frustration theory was originally proposed the authors postulated that not only was frustration the only cause of aggression, but frustration necessitated aggression:

> More specifically the proposition is that the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression.[1]

After feed-back from readers the authors conceded that the latter half of the above statement was ambiguous; first, because it could be interpreted to mean that the only result of frustration was aggression, and second, because it failed to distinguish between impulse to aggression, which the authors feel invariably follows frustration, and actual aggressive behavior, which they concede may not follow frustration. They therefore have emended the passage after "contrariwise" to the following: "frustration produces instigation to a number of different types of response,

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[1]Ibid., p. 1.

one of which is an instigation to some form of aggression."[1]

Some Criticisms of the Frustration Theory

Leonard Berkowitz, author of several books and articles on aggression, has made a valuable critique of the frustration theory of aggression. He acknowledges its importance--"this hypothesis has stimulated or profoundly influenced hundreds of studies"[2]--and concedes that frustration does increase the probability of aggression. He notes a frequent criticism of the frustration theory: it lends credence to the idea that aggression is "built in" to the human organism. This arouses the opposition of that group of psychologists who believe that all aggression is a learned response. Actually the authors of the frustration theory specified that they wished to abstract from any debate as to whether aggression is learned or innate, but their assertion that frustration always leads to aggression, at least as an urge, lends support to the contention that such a connection is innate rather than learned. This "innate vs. learned" debate we will consider more fully in a later section.

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[1]Neal E. Miller et al., "Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis," in Understanding Human Motivation, eds. Chalmers E. Stacey and Manfred F. DeMartino (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1965), p. 348.

[2]Leonard Berkowitz, Roots of Aggression (New York: Atherton Press, 1969), p. 2.

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Berkowitz points out that the concept of frustration has not been adequately developed by the authors of the frustration theory. Specifically, he cites studies that indicate that aggressive feelings and behavior sometimes do not result from frustration if the offended party perceives that the offender was acting reasonably.[1] This harmonizes well with the observation made by Aristotle that a person does not become angry at an injury unless he considers it to be unmerited. (Aristotle's views on this we will consider in our treatment of anger.) Berkowitz suggests that the failure of many studies to confirm the frustration theory resulted from a vagueness in the Dollard-Miller definition of frustration.

Karl Menninger touched on the inadequacy of the Dollard-Miller definition of frustration when he stated that no one who has ever had his toes stepped on can accept the frustration theory of aggression. The point being that having one's toes stepped on certainly arouses aggressive feelings but does not fit the Dollard-Miller definition of frustration: "that condition which exists when a goal-response suffers interference." This, in terms of the Dollard-Miller thesis, means that some sequence of behavior has been initiated and is now interfered with. The person sitting quietly before his toes are stepped on has not necessarily initiated any sequence of behavior that is interfered with. If the

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[1] Ibid., p. 6.

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concept of frustration were broadened to include any thwarting of the individual's desires, then the stepping-on-the-toe process would indeed be a frustration of the stepee's desire for physical well-being.

Berkowitz disagrees with the Dollard-Miller assertion that frustration always causes aggression. He points out that continued frustration can cause the victim to become dejected and apathetic, rather than aggressive. Berkowitz also maintains that aggression can spring from causes other than frustration. He cites studies showing that animals may act aggressively even when there is no reason to believe that they are frustrated.[1] Other studies indicate that people can learn to enjoy displaying aggressive behavior even in the absence of frustration, just as they learn other types of behavior. Children learn to imitate aggressive adult behavior, especially when some reward (praise, group approval, etc.) is forthcoming, and they need no triggering frustration to indulge in such behavior.[2]

The Self-Esteem Theory of Aggression

The first step in formulating a theory of aggression is to arrive at a definition of aggression. As a start, let us consider some of the meanings of aggression in popular usage. A relatively restricted meaning is "unprovoked attack." Thus, the "aggressor" in a war is commonly

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[1]Ibid., p. 13. [2]Ibid., p. 14.

considered to mean the party who began the war, without sufficient justification. An "act of aggression" is similarly understood. But in a broader sense aggression includes a vigorous and justified defense. The country which has been attacked must summon up all its powers of aggression to defend itself. "The best defense is a good offense." In a still broader sense, aggression means any attack upon an obstacle, inanimate as well as animate, abstracting from any questions of moral justification. When a firm advertises for "aggressive young men" as salesmen, they have in mind persons who will make a vigorous attack upon sales resistance. Here, being "aggressive" may well involve showing especial cordiality and friendliness. In this same broad sense of aggression being an attack upon an obstacle to our desires, we attack a meal (in its present form, the meal is an obstacle to our desire for nourishment, and must first be cut up and chewed up), we attack a problem, we attack a job.

Now let us compare these popular, common concepts of aggression with some of the definitions used by those who propose theories of aggression. Dollard, Miller, et al., proponents of the frustration theory of aggression, define aggression as "an act whose goal-response is injury to an organism or organism-surrogate." As we saw previously, by goal-response they mean purpose.

Berkowitz follows the Dollard-Miller lead, defining aggression as behavior, overt or implicit (thoughts) whose

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goal-response is the inflicting of injury on some object or person.[1]

Erich Fromm points out the many connotations that have been given to the word "aggression."

> The equivocal use of the word "aggression" has created great confusion in the rich literature on this topic. The term has been applied to the behavior of a man defending his life against attack, to a robber killing his victim in order to obtain money, to a sadist torturing a prisoner. The confusion goes even further: the term has been used for the sexual approach of the male to the female, to the forward-driving impulses of a mountain climber or a salesman, and to the peasant plowing the earth.[2]

Fromm notes that the original meaning of being aggressive is a very broad concept:

> To be aggressive, in its original meaning of "aggressing" can be defined as moving forward toward a goal without undue hesitation, doubt, or fear.[3]

Fromm distinguishes between "benign" aggression and "malignant" aggression:

> In this book I have used the term "aggression" for defensive, reactive aggression that I have subsumed under "benign aggression," but call "destructiveness" and "cruelty" the specifically human propensity to destroy and to crave for absolute control ("malignant aggression").[4]

Anthony Storr, in his book Human Aggression, a defense of the position that aggression is innate, notes that aggression is "one of those words which everyone knows, but which is nevertheless hard to define."

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[1]Berkowitz, Roots of Aggression, p. 3.

[2]Fromm, Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 19.

[3]Ibid., p. 214.

[4]Ibid., p. 20.

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> As psychologists and psychiatrists use it, it covers a very wide range of human behavior. The red-faced infant squalling for the bottle is being aggressive; and so is the judge who awards a thirty-year sentence for robbery.[1]

He remarks on the difficulty that "there is no clear dividing line between those forms of aggression which we all deplore and those which we must not disown if we are to survive."[2] Here he is recognizing the twofold aspect that Fromm has noted, benign and malignant aggression, but he realizes that in many actual cases it is difficult to decide which is present. Storr rejects the Dollard-Miller/Berkowitz definition of aggression as too limited. It fails to recognize the many necessary and useful types of human behavior that commonly are considered to be aggressive activities.

Konrad Lorenz in his book On Aggression gives at the outset a brief and clear definition of aggression. For him, aggression is "the fighting instinct in man and beast that is directed against members of the same species."[3] This is even more limited than the Dollard-Miller definition, which included injury to an offender of another species or even an inanimate object, as "organism surrogate."

As our own definition of aggression we offer: "aggression is behavior intended (consciously or unconsciously) by the aggressor to overcome an obstacle to his desires." We may want to modify this definition later in the

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[1]Storr, Human Aggression, p. 1. [2]Ibid., p. 2.

[3]Konrad Lorenz, On Aggression (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), p. ix.

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light of additional considerations. It seems that this working definition captures the essence of aggression, benign or malignant, and is broad enough to cover the wide variety of activities that in common parlance are referred to as aggressive. It also is in perfect harmony with the original meaning of aggressive, as noted by Erich Fromm: "moving toward a goal without undue hesitation, doubt or fear." As a shorthand phrase for our definition of aggression we will use "overcoming behavior," that is, behavior aimed at overcoming an obstacle to one's desires.

Types of Aggression

Dividing aggression according to the purpose of the aggressor, we suggest that all forms of aggressive behavior can be comprehended under three types: aggression for revenge, aggression for gain, and aggression for security. Aggression for revenge is any behavior that is motivated by a desire to "get even" with another who the aggressor believes has unjustly injured him or those with whom he identifies. The injury may have been physical, verbal, or one of omission (neglecting to render the signs of respect which the individual thought were due.) Aggression for revenge is motivated by anger, even though the aggressor may be quite calm and thinking with clarity. Anger can be of an icy, cold and composed sort, as well as raging. The aggressor in premeditating his revenge may think about it and discuss it coolly and rationally. Among these "get back at the other person"

manifestations of aggression are the majority of the daily aggressions we witness: snide remarks, quarrels, family fights, racial unrest, revolutionary activity, etc. Sometimes, mingled with the "get even" motive there is desire for security or gain.

By "aggression for security" we intend to include all those overcoming behaviors by which the individual hopes to protect something already possessed by himself or by those with whom he identifies. Defense of life, of bodily integrity, freedom, property, reputation, etc., are included in this. Of course in actual cases it would not always be clear from observation to what extent the aggressor was motivated by a desire for revenge, and to what extent his motive was for security.

Under "aggression for gain" we include those overcoming behaviors aimed at acquiring possession of some good other than security or revenge. Included here would be "benign" aggressions, such as self-discipline, work, study, eating, etc., as well as "malignant" aggressions, such as robbery, wars of aggression, economic injustices and oppressions, etc.

Self-Esteem Theory of Aggression

We propose that all aggression is motivated by a desire for self-esteem (enhancement or protection), or a desire for sense pleasure, or both, with self-esteem playing by far the larger role. We will consider our three types of

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aggression to discover the underlying self-esteem/sense pleasure motivation in each.

Anger and revenge aggression

First, let us consider the revenge, "getting even," sort of aggression, which accounts for so much of the personal injuries we human beings inflict upon each other. Anger, hot, or cold and composed, is at the root of revenge aggression. And it is our thesis that anger is always due to an affront to one's self-esteem.

Is it not true that we can usually trace the source of our anger to an insult, a put-down, by someone or by some situation? Whenever someone else says or does something that belittles us we are inclined to get angry. Experience teaches us to overlook the slight or to control our annoyance, but the urge to anger is there. It seems safe to say that any deliberate slight, put-down, insult, disparagement, directed toward us by another is productive of anger, or the impulse to anger. And what is the nature of a slight, an insult, put-down, etc.? They are all words to describe some action or speech or omission by another that tells us "you are not possessed of as much good as you think you are." I am passed over for promotion and the coveted position was given to another--this can anger me if I thought myself better suited for the promotion than was the fortunate man. The employer's action has said otherwise--"you are not possessed of as much good as you think you are." This is, by definition, a

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threat to my self-esteem. Does this mean that my self-esteem has actually been lowered to some extent by the insult, slight, etc., or has it only been challenged? If I get angry, it seems that my self-esteem has not only been threatened, but has actually been lowered to some extent. We don't like to admit that such is the case, and if our antagonist indicates that he has scored a triumph--"aha, that really hit you where you live!" "oh, I've hurt you!" etc.--we ordinarily vehemently protest that such is not the case, the very vehemence of our protest giving the lie to our words. Our self-esteem depends at least in part upon the opinions that others have of us, and when another shows that he does not hold us in as high regard as we would like, this hurts, although we immediately try to recoup by disparaging the judgment of the other.

But in some cases it may seem that the self-esteem of the angered one has not been lowered in the slightest. For instance, a small dog in a home where I am visiting barks furiously at me. I am annoyed. But how can this be a matter of self-esteem, for after all, I don't care a bit about this dog's opinion of me. Hopefully, I will never see him again, and after all, he is only a dog. But actually this barking incident is a definite put-down for me. We have all absorbed the Hollywood mystique that dogs and children <u>know</u>. They know if you are a good guy or a bad guy. You may be able to fool adults with your suavity or charm or captivating smile, but dogs know. When an apparent good guy in a movie is

snarled at by a dog, we, the audience, instantly know that this apparent good guy is actually a sinister character. On the other hand, if a bad guy receives signs of affection from a dog, we the audience have the triumphant insight that he is really one of the good guys, or at least a lovable good bad guy.

So when Bosco barks at me, and Bosco's mistress archly remarks "Bosco doesn't seem to like you," I know that I am the victim of the irrefutable put-down. Not only does Bosco's mistress have me marked as someone who will bear watching, or avoiding, but in the back of my mind is the unvoiced doubt, maybe Bosco has a point there, something about me is, well . . . . After all, dogs know.

But isn't there such a thing as just plain outrage at evil conduct, without bringing self-esteem into the picture? Someone may say "I found myself angry when reading of Nixon's shenanigans when he held the highest office in the land--his arrogant use of power, his attempt to obstruct justice, his lying to the American people. Surely I was not angry because of some affront to my self-esteem. Rather, my anger was simply outrage at evil conduct. If you will, righteous anger." In response, we suggest that there were two or three elements in Nixon's conduct which may have affronted the self-esteem of the speaker. First, the "arrogant use of power." An arrogant person is saying, in effect, "you, the public, have neither the intelligence to discover my peccadilloes nor the effectiveness to do anything about it."

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Having someone lie to us is also an affront to our self-esteem. We have been "played for a sucker," taken advantage of, used. Our intelligence has been insulted. Also, a large element in righteous anger is the fact that the offender has flouted a moral code that we consider important, and in so doing he is telling us "your views on this matter are of little value, your judgment in this important matter is erroneous. Further, I have little regard for your opinion of me." Finally, the fact that Nixon seemed to be "getting away" with it was a further affront to many. It pointed up an inequality--I, or the little people with whom I identify, could not get away with such conduct, why should he?" Inequality, when we come out on the short end of it, is by definition a lack of excellence in ourselves in this particular matter. In the Nixon case, it was a lack of power in the one who could not "get away with it." Awareness of this lack of excellence is an affront to self-esteem.

Why would some people <u>not</u> be angered by the Nixon episode? Possibly they had doubts that Nixon was as guilty as portrayed, or felt that what he did was not really so outrageous, perhaps was even justified under the circumstances. Or perhaps the whole episode touched their lives so tangentially that they had not strong feelings about it. Others might take the prevalent European view: "So what else is new--one expects politicians to behave thus."

The Nixon episode serves to illustrate the source of righteous anger in general: when someone "puts down" a

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person or group or cause or value with which we identify, he has put us down.

Even though we concede that whenever we are angry, the source has been an affront to our self-esteem, does it follow that any perceived affront to our self-esteem will make us angry? In other words, even though insult is the necessary cause for anger, is it also a necessitating cause for anger? Experience indicates not. We have seen in movies and TV programs the convincing behavior of the victims when bank robbers burst into the bank armed with machine guns and roughly order everyone to lie down on the floor. This callous disregard for the victims' feelings and personal dignity does not arouse their anger but rather fear and eager compliance. The victims realize that any attempt to "strike back" would likely mean death. If anger even becomes incipient, it is smothered in fear. In anger there is always the urge to strike back, to get even, and in this situation such a possibility is out of the question. Hence no anger. Of course there are some individuals who would become angry even in this situation, either because of a lack of grasp of the situation, or because they saw some hope of verbally or physically striking back. Relevant here is the remark by Aristotle (Rhetoric, II,2) and Aquinas (Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 46, a. 1, corp.) that injury arouses anger in the injured party only if he has the desire and hope for revenge.

This element in anger of wanting to "get even" suggests that an accurate definition of anger might be "a surge

of determination to repair an injury to self-esteem by injuring the person responsible." Of course this urge may never be carried out, inhibited as it usually is by other considerations. The repair to self-esteem is accomplished by the fact that by injuring the other (physically or verbally) we have to this degree asserted our superiority over him. He is no longer "one up" on us.

Support from others for our theory of anger

Can we find in the writings of others any support for our contention that anger is always due to an affront to self-esteem? Although Gregory Rochlin's thesis is that aggression is always due to an affront to self-esteem, I fail to find in his book any explicit statement that anger is caused by such an affront. However, it seems that he would agree to that conclusion, inasmuch as most of the examples of aggression which he gives are anger-motivated. Further, if aggression is always caused by threat to self-esteem, and anger (overt) is a species of aggression, then anger too is always caused by a threat to self-esteem.

We do however find explicit support in the writings of Aquinas. He poses the question "whether the sole motive of anger is slight or contempt?" Here, slight and contempt are used to translate the Latin parvipensio, "thinking little of," "belittling." Following his invariable method, Aquinas begins by proposing three or four arguments contrary to the opinion he will later support. Following these, he cites

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an authority supporting his own views, then states those views, with supporting arguments, and finally answers the original objections. Rather than follow this format, we will present Aquinas' views, in full, inasmuch as they contain many terse insights, and then consider the objections with answers.

> On the contrary, The Philosopher[1] says that "anger is a desire, with sorrow, for vengeance, on account of a seeming slight done unbecomingly."
>
> I answer that, All the causes of anger are reduced to slight. For "slight is of three kinds," as stated in the Rhetoric, namely, "contempt, despiteful treatment," that is, hindering one from doing one's will, and "insolence," and all motives of anger are reduced to these three. Two reasons may be assigned for this. First, because anger seeks another's hurt as being a means of just vengeance; and therefore it seeks vengeance in so far as it seems just. Now just vengeance is taken only for that which is done unjustly; hence that which provokes anger is always something considered in the light of an injustice. Hence the Philosopher says that "men are not angry if they think that they have wronged someone and are suffering justly on that account; for there is no anger at what is just." Now injury is done to another in three ways: namely, through ignorance, through passion, and through choice. Then, most of all, a man does an injustice when he does it from choice, on purpose, or from deliberate malice, as stated in the Ethics. Therefore we are most of all angry with those who, in our opinion, have hurt us on purpose. For if we think that someone has done us an injury through ignorance or through passion, either we are not angry with him at all, or very much less, for to do anything through ignorance or through passion takes away from the notion of injury, and to a certain extent calls for mercy and forgiveness. Those, on the other hand, who do an injury on purpose seem to sin from contempt; therefore we are angry with them most of all. Hence the Philosopher says that "we are either not angry at all, or not very angry with those who have acted through anger, because they do not seem to have acted slightingly."
>
> The second reason is because a slight is opposed to a man's excellence, for; "men think little of things that

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[1]Aquinas always refers to Aristotle as "the Philosopher."

> are not worth much." Now we seek for some kind of excellence from all our goods. Consequently whatever injury is inflicted on us, in so far as it takes away from our excellence, seems to pertain to slight.[1]

To paraphrase Aquinas: every case of anger is due to the angered one having been given the message "you do not possess as much excellence as you think you do." The message is not simply "you do not possess much excellence," because the hearer might agree with this, and thus would not be angered. The element of injustice lies in the fact that the offender is giving us a message that we feel is contrary to the truth; he is attempting to deprive us of the esteem that we feel is rightfully ours. If we see that the offender is acting through ignorance or passion ("he doesn't know what he is saying") this mitigates the deliberateness of the insult, and hence mitigates our anger.

Aquinas proposes and answers arguments supporting the position that insult (slight, contempt) is not the only cause of anger. First, we get angry when we suffer an injury, but an injury does not necessarily involve an insult. (For instance, a car slams into the rear end of your car. You are injured and angry, but where is there any insult here?) Aquinas answers that to the degree that our injury is evidently due to a cause other than contempt, our anger is mitigated. Thus, when we discover that the accident was not due to a careless disregard for our welfare, but rather to a

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[1] Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica (New York: Benziger Bros., 1947), I-II, Q. 47, a. 2, corp.

heart attack suffered by the other driver, our anger dissolves.

The second objection states that brute animals obviously become angry, but they are not sensible to slights, inasmuch as they do not seek honor as such. In response, Aquinas remarks that although animals do not seek honor as such, yet they do seek a certain superiority, and they are angered by anything that deprives them of this superiority.

The third objection and answer bear verbatim quote:

> Obj. 3. Further, the Philosopher gives many other causes of anger, for instance, being forgotten by others; that others should rejoice in our misfortunes; that they should make known our evils; being hindered from doing as we like. Therefore being slighted is not the only motive for being angry.
>
> Reply Obj. 3. Each of those causes amounts to some kind of slight. Thus forgetfulness is a clear sign of slight esteem, for the more we think of a thing the more it is fixed in our memory. Again if a man does not hesitate by his remarks to give pain to another, this seems to show that the man thinks little of him; and those too who show signs of hilarity when another is in misfortune, seem to care little about his good or evil. Again he that hinders another from carrying out his will, without deriving thereby any profit to himself, seems not to care much for his friendship. Consequently all those things, in so far as they are signs of contempt, provoke anger.

Four hundred years later, another objection to Aquinas' position is voiced by Thomas Hobbes, always on the alert to express his disagreement with the Scholastics. Hobbes states:

> Anger or sudden courage is nothing but the appetite or overcoming present opposition. It hath been defined commonly to be grief proceeding from an opinion of contempt; which is confuted by the often experience which we have of being moved to anger by things inanimate, and

without sense, and consequently incapable of contemning us.[1]

Aquinas has posed and answered this very objection in dealing with another question: "whether anger is only towards those to whom one has a relation of justice?" He phrases the objection against a positive reply:

> Obj. 1. For there is no justice between man and irrational beings. And yet sometimes one is angry with irrational beings; thus, out of anger, a writer throws away his pen, or a rider strikes his horse. Therefore anger is not only towards those to whom one has a relation of justice.
>
> Reply Obj. 1. As stated above (a. 4, Reply 2) anger, though it follows an act of reason, can nevertheless be in dumb animals that are devoid of reason, in so far as through their natural instinct they are moved by their imagination to something like rational action. Since then in man there is both reason and imagination, the movement of anger can be aroused in man in two ways. First, when only his imagination proclaims the injury, and in this way, man is aroused to a movement of anger even against irrational and inanimate beings, which movement is like that which occurs in animals against anything that injures them. Secondly, by the reason proclaiming the injury; and thus, according to the Philosopher, "it is impossible to be angry with insensible things, or with the dead," both because they feel no pain, which is, above all, what the angry man seeks in those with whom he is angry, and because there is no question of vengeance on them, since they can do us no harm.[2]

In addition to the above answer, perhaps Hobbes' objection can be answered by the phenomenon of displacement, often mentioned in this connection by modern psychologists. Just as a man angered by his boss but afraid to respond directly to the offender may come home and take out his

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[1]Thomas Hobbes, The English Works of Thomas Hobbes (n.p.: Scientia Aalen, 1962), 4: 42.

[2]Aquinas, Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 47, a. 7.

aggressive feelings on his wife, so also he might vent his anger on an animal or inanimate object.

As we have seen above, both Aristotle and Aquinas mention a feature of anger that we had not considered. That is, a person does not become angry unless he considers the offense against himself to have been unjustified. This seems eminently confirmed by our own experience. Injustice is what angers us. Injustice inflicted upon ourselves or those with whom we identify. In view of this, our previous definition of anger should be modified in the light of Aristotle's definition, which covers the essential points: "Anger is a desire, with sorrow, for vengeance, on account of a seeming slight done unbecomingly." (Rhetoric, II, 2). Now sorrow is awareness of some loss of excellence. And since self-esteem is by definition "awareness of excellence possessed," sorrow can be defined as a drop in self-esteem. Not only does every drop in self-esteem bring sorrow, and not only is every sorrow due to a drop in self-esteem, but every sorrow is, in itself and by its very nature, decreased self-esteem. Thus, rendering Aristotle's definition in terms of self-esteem, we have: "anger is a desire, accompanied by decreased self-esteem, for a restoration of that self-esteem by injury to the person who has been responsible for unjustly decreasing our self-esteem." In a less cumbersome phrasing, "anger is a desire to restore our own unjustly injured self-esteem by lowering the self-esteem of the person considered to be responsible." Only by lowering his self-esteem can we

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"get even." Only thus can we adequately suit the punishment to the crime. In line with this, Aquinas points out that the angry man wants the person upon whom he is taking vengeance to know who is inflicting the injury and that it is in repayment for the prior unjust injury. (Summa Theologica, I-II, Q. 46, a. 6, reply obj. 2.)

Still this does not do full justice to Aristotle's definition. For he uses the term "slight." This implies not merely an injury to our self-esteem, but an intentional injury. As noted previously, if another has injured us through ignorance or passion, this mitigates or even dissolves anger. The key feature arousing our anger is contempt for us expressed by the other. To include this in our definition we can qualify "responsible" with "deliberately." Thus, "anger is a desire to restore our own unjustly injured self-esteem by lowering the self-esteem of the person considered to be deliberately responsible." Whoops, we still don't have it right. For even though our self-esteem has not been injured unjustly, we will get angry if we perceive the offense as unjust. Subject to further modifications should additional insights arise, the refined definition of anger is: "a desire to restore our self-esteem, perceived as unjustly injured, by lowering the self-esteem of the person considered to be deliberately responsible."

This new definition harmonizes well with our definition of aggression: "behavior aimed at overcoming an obstacle to the agent's desires." This locates expressed

anger as a species of aggression. In anger, the agent's desire is to have an unthreatened self-esteem. The obstacle to be overcome is the "one-up" condition that the provocateur has established by his affront to the agent's self-esteem. This imbalance must be removed by "evening the score."

Scope of anger-inspired aggression

We have seen that the cause of anger is a "put-down" which the angered one has received from another. The attempt to recoup this wounded self-esteem lies at the root of anger-inspired aggression. But how significant is this element in the total picture of human aggression? That is, what proportion of human aggressive activities are anger-inspired?

As a start, almost the totality of family quarrels, street fights, feuds, and inter-group strife seems to be anger-inspired. Often financial considerations enter the picture as a factor conducing to anger, but the direct triggering element in the aggression is a feeling of anger over having been victimized by the other party, or insulted in some way.

Former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark quotes Aristotle approvingly to the effect that the universal cause of revolutionary activity is anger aroused by perceived inequality:

> Aristotle told us that the chief and universal cause of the revolutionary impulse is the desire for equality. I agree with him. What outrages an individual more than a sense of being the victim in inequality, of injustice?

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> The deprivations which occur in the whole range of subjective and objective activities in society over a long period of time create rage. This anger can manifest itself in a loss of control and thus in a state of lawlessness.[1]

Prominent black activists have repeatedly affirmed that the cause of "black rage" is the constant affronts to their human dignity that blacks have suffered in this country. On the scope of black anger we have the testimony of black psychologists William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs:

> People bear all they can and, if required, bear even more. But if they are black in present-day America they have been asked to shoulder too much. They have had all they can stand. They will be harried no more. Turning from their tormentors, they are filled with rage.
>
> The growing anger of Negroes is frightening to white America. There is a feeling of betrayal and undeserved attack. White people have responded with a rage of their own. . . .
>
> And of the things that need knowing, none is more important than that all blacks are angry. White Americans seem not to recognize it. They seem to think that all the trouble is caused by only a few "extremists." They ought to know better. We have talked to many Negroes under the most intimate circumstances and we know better.[2]

The core reason for this anger is the affront to personal dignity offered by inequality and demeaning treatment. Malcolm X elaborates on this:

> She [America] has not only deprived us of the right to be a citizen, she has deprived us of the right to be human beings, the right to be recognized and respected as men and women. In this country the black can be fifty years old and he is still a "boy."

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[1]Ramsey Clark, "Crime and Violence in the United States," in Aggression, ed. Shervert H. Frazier (Baltimore: Research Publications, Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Disease, 1974), p. 320.

[2]William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, Black Rage (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968). p. 4.

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> All of our people have the same goals, the same objective. That objective is freedom, justice, equality. All of us want recognition and respect as human beings. We don't want to be integrationists. Nor do we want to be separationists. We want to be human beings. Integration is only a method that is used by some groups to obtain freedom, justice, equality or human dignity.
>
> We have to keep in mind at all times that we are not fighting for integration, nor are we fighting for separation. We are fighting for recognition as human beings.[1]

Eldridge Cleaver expressed his anger at white society by raping white women. For him, rape was not primarily a way of satisfying sexual lust, but rather a way to gain revenge for the humiliations he and his race had suffered at the hands of the whites. For Cleaver, the white woman was the hated symbol of inequality: here was a tempting prize which the white man could enjoy but which was forbidden to the black man.

> Somehow I arrived at the conclusion that, as a matter of principle, it was of paramount importance for me to have an antagonistic, ruthless attitude toward white women. . . .
>
> I became a rapist. To refine my technique and modus operandi, I started out by practicing on black girls in the ghetto--in the black ghetto where dark and vicious deeds appear not as aberrations or deviations from the norm, but as part of the sufficiency of the Evil of a day--and when I considered myself smooth enough, I crossed the tracks and sought out white prey. . . .
>
> Rape was an insurrectionary act. It delighted me that I was defying and trampling upon the white man's law, upon his system of values, and that I was defiling his women--and this point, I believe, was the most satisfying to me because I was very resentful over the historical fact of how the white man has used the black woman. I felt I was getting revenge. . . .[2]

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[1] Malcolm X, Malcolm X Speaks (New York: Merit Publishers, 1965), pp. 50-1.

[2] Eldridge Cleaver, Soul On Ice (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1968), pp. 13-4.

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> Many whites flatter themselves with the idea that the Negro male's lust and desire for the white dream girl is purely an esthetic attraction, but nothing could be farther from the truth. His motivation is often of such a bloody, hateful, bitter, and malignant nature that whites would really be hard pressed to find it flattering. I have discussed these points with prisoners who were convicted of rape, and their motivations are very plain.[1]

As Cleaver has confessed, it was a desire to boost his self-esteem that led him to become a rapist, and later it was a desire to boost his self-esteem that led him to renounce rape:

> After I returned to prison, I took a long look at myself and, for the first time in my life, admitted that I was wrong, that I had gone astray--astray not so much from the white man's law as from being human, civilized--for I could not approve the act of rape. Even though I had some insight into my own motivations, I did not feel justified. I lost my self-respect. My pride as a man dissolved and my whole fragile moral structure seemed to collapse, completely shattered.[2]

Rape as a tactic for increasing self-respect had provided some apparent successes, but was revealed as self-defeating by deeper introspection.

We suggest that Cleaver's motivation was not unique. The average rapist is probably motivated in part by the anticipation of sense pleasure that he hopes to gain from the act, but it seems likely that self-esteem considerations are paramount--by thus asserting mastery over a woman the rapist gains temporary relief from feelings of inferiority and inadequacy that women awaken in him; possibly also he is gaining revenge for contempt shown him by a woman or women in the past.

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[1]Ibid., p. 16. [2]Ibid., p. 15.

The target of Cleaver's rage, white women, have their own share of rage against American society, according to feminist leaders. And the source of their anger is the same as that of the black militants: they feel they have been treated as second-class citizens. The nitty-gritty of this anger is not pique at getting less material goods, or jobs that pay less, or having less power and influence than the male white. All these things are important, yes, but the core source of their anger is being considered and treated as somehow inferior. This constant belittling of human dignity is what infuriates, and the matter of jobs, money and power assume importance primarily as symbols of human worth, value and dignity. The case is well stated by Ann Nietzke, self-proclaimed feminist, writing in Human Behavior:

> The momentum for the women's movement has come out of our growing sense of self-worth and dignity and potential, and out of anger and frustration that our worth as persons has been so long denied and suppressed.[1]

The aggression stemming from feminist anger has thus far been primarily verbal and at the ballot box, although the sharp increase in crimes committed by females may also be a reflection of this anger.

Anger at having been belittled, patronized, and put down by society may be at the root of many of the so-called "motiveless" killings we read about. Young Charles Starkweather and his girl-friend Caril Fugate go on a killing

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[1]Ann Nietzke, "Hostility on the Laugh Track," Human Behavior, May 1974, p. 64.

spree in rural America, shooting relatives and strangers in a bloodthirsty frenzy. Why? Charles Whitman climbs into the tower on the campus at the University of Texas at Austin and focuses telescopic sights on the ant-like human forms below, killing several and wounding others. Why? Robert Speck holds nine nurses captive in a room for several hours, takes them out one by one and kills them with a knife. Why? Various reasons have been suggested--brain tumors, sexual frustrations, loveless childhood. We suggest that the triggering factor may be rage, a rage arising from the feeling of being considered a nobody. When a human being meets day after day with condescension, contempt, ridicule, belittling, only a saint is not infuriated. Faced with such a situation, some have reacted by heroic efforts to accomplish and achieve and thus win respect and recognition. Some instead escape from human society as far as possible, finding consolation in pets, in the fantasy world of TV and movies, in solitary hobbies, etc. Among the variety of possible reactions to the situation of finding oneself universally regarded as a nobody, the "ultimate solution" is appealing to some because of a quirk in temperament or outlook. Instant superiority and God-like status can be achieved by killing another human being. Here is revenge on society for its rejection, here is assertion of the ultimate power over others, here is unanswerable--for the short term--proof of superiority.

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Relevant here is Erich Fromm's observation:[1]

> There is extensive clinical material on this. I refer here to the numerous cases in the United States, where frequently 17- and 18-year-old people simply go out and stab a person they don't know at all and then explain, "That was the greatest moment of my life, because I saw on the pain-distorted face of this person that I surely can make an impression, that I am not completely nothing." . . .
>
> Hence, it appears to me that the destructive tendencies of today are therefore increasing so quickly because boredom is increasing, because the senselessness of life is increasing, because people are becoming more fearful, because they have no faith in the future and no hope. Also not the least, because they feel themselves cheated by all promises, by all ideologies, by all parties, by all religions. In this situation, many people see only one satisfaction, to destroy life itself, in order to avenge themselves on the deceivers and on themselves.

Fromm recognizes that the teen-age killers are acting from anger--"feel themselves cheated," and "destroy life itself in order to avenge themselves"--and are acting to increase self-esteem--"I surely can make an impression, that I am not completely nothing."

Thus we have seen testimony that aggression arising from revolutionary activities, from black militancy, from feminist militancy, and from "motiveless" killings is due to anger. The anger in turn has been caused by a feeling of having been "put down" by society. This wound to self-esteem, so often resulting from perceived inequality, motivates attacks on those institutions and values which are seen as responsible for the humiliations suffered.

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[1]Adelbert Reif, "Erich Fromm on Human Aggression," Human Behavior, April 1975, p. 23.

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To our above list of aggressions arising from anger we should add "wars to protect or restore national honor." Granted, some of the instigators of such wars may be much less interested in national honor than in pecuniary profit, or power ploys, but to the extent that concern for national honor agitates the populace, they are motivated by anger. A threat to personal honor angers us; a threat to the honor of the group with which we identify angers us. Indeed, in the latter case we feel less inhibition in giving free rein to our anger and seeking to punish the offender who has threatened our self-esteem. The Spanish-American War is a classic example. When the battleship Maine was blown up, the American people, with considerable help from Hearst newspapers, regarded this as an insult to American honor that must be avenged.

Aggression inspired by desire for gain

In presenting the self-esteem theory of aggression we divided aggression into three types: aggression inspired by anger, aggression arising from a desire for gain, and aggression arising from a desire for security. We have seen that anger-inspired aggression is an attempt to restore a wounded self-esteem. Now we will consider whether self-esteem lies at the root of aggression for gain. By gain we mean acquisition of additional possessions, including money, or acquisition of power. What are the immediate motives urging us to such acquisitions? Part of our desire for

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material possessions is traceable to a desire for the sense pleasures that possessions can bring--comfort, good food, desirable sex partners, good medical care offering more freedom from pain. But a much more pervasive motivation is the desire for the status and prestige that money and possessions bring. Society tends to judge our worth--and we usually adopt the same standard--by our material possessions. The man with a nice car and home and substantial real estate holdings is treated with deference. Thorstein Veblen, famous economist-sociologist of the early 1900's, comments on this self-esteem motivation underlying the desire for gain:

> So soon as the possession of property becomes the basis of popular esteem, therefore, it becomes also a requisite to that complacency which we call self-respect. In any community where goods are held in severalty it is necessary, in order to his own peace of mind, that an individual should possess as large a portion of goods as others with whom he is accustomed to class himself; and it is extremely gratifying to possess something more than others.
>
> . . . the end sought by accumulation is to rank high in comparison with the rest of the community in point of pecuniary strength. So long as the comparison is distinctly unfavourable to himself, the normal, average individual will live in chronic dissatisfaction with his present lot; and when he has reached what may be called the normal pecuniary standard of the community, or of his class in the community, this chronic dissatisfaction will give place to a restless training to place a wider and ever-widening pecuniary interval between himself and this average standard.[1]
>
> Those members of the community who fall short of this, somewhat indefinite, normal degree of prowess or of property suffer in the esteem of their fellowmen; and consequently they suffer also in their own esteem, since

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[1]Thorstein Veblen, The Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1912), p. 31.

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> the usual basis of self-respect is the respect accorded by one's neighbors.[2]

Veblen notes that the desire for security, for comfort, and for power may also motivate our efforts to gain material possessions. Comfort we have already seen to be a matter of sense pleasure, but it too may have self-esteem roots in that we feel proud of having thus well provided for our needs, and further, we may by our luxuries win the admiration or envy of our neighbors. Security we will consider in the next section. The desire for power is one of the more obvious self-esteem manifestations. Power over our environment and over other people gives us a most gratifying sense of our own worth. The person who disavows any desire for power over others, and protests that he only wants power in order to do good, to accomplish, and to build a better world, is also deriving a greatly heightened sense of his own worth and value from his contribution, or projected contribution, to society. How can his good deeds be divorced from a glowing self-image as a benefactor to mankind? In our present consideration, aggression for gain, the "selflessness" of the person who takes from others in order to accomplish good deeds has been glamorized by Robin Hood and his genre. We suggest that a familiarity with the Robin Hoods would reveal that their motives are a combination of desire for revenge on the "haves," a desire for acclamation from those benefitted, a desire for the feeling of exultation that power gives, and

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[1] Ibid., p. 30.

a desire for a comforting self-image as selfless benefactor to others--and often, a desire for personal pecuniary gain. All of these are self-esteem considerations. Further, there may be operative a sense of identification with those being benefitted. As we have considered in the chapter on altruism, this sense of identification means that the others are being viewed as extended selves. Good done to these others is then good done to one's extended self.

In Chapter IV we have considered in more detail this fact that the desire for possessions or power is reduceable to a desire for sense pleasure and/or self-esteem, with the latter predominating.

Types of aggression arising from the desire for gain

Wars of conquest, fraud, embezzlement, robbery, etc., are patently forms of aggression whose aim is gain. Thus they are due at root to the desire for heightened self-esteem, and occasionally, to a minimal degree, to a desire for sense pleasure. To the extent that the desire for revenge is sometimes an accompanying motive for such aggressions, they are anger-inspired, and ultimately self-esteem motivated, as we have seen in the preceding section.

Aggression for security

Under the heading of aggression for security are wars of legitimate self-defense and individual acts of self-defense. These do not fall within the dictionary definition of aggression as "unprovoked attack," but they do meet our

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own definition of aggression as "behavior aimed at overcoming an obstacle to the agent's desires." Also they accord with the common concept of aggression as behavior aimed at inflicting injury upon another.

To arrive at the motivation underlying this type of aggression we must consider what security means. We suggest that in the present context security means retention of those goods already possessed, whether they be life, liberty, health, honor, possessions, etc. Thus the motive for continued retention of these goods is essentially the same as the motive for desiring them in the first place. This we have seen in Chapter IV to be a desire for sense pleasure to some extent, but primarily a desire for an awareness of good possessed, that is, a desire for self-esteem. In Chapter II we saw that even self-preservation is desired as a means to continued enjoyment of sense pleasure and self-esteem.

Summary of the self-esteem theory of aggression

Anger-inspired aggression is an attempt on the part of the aggressor to gain revenge and balm for a wounded self-esteem. Aggression for gain has as its immediate motivation the desire for possessions and/or power, which are desired for the sense pleasure and self-esteem they bring, with the latter playing the major role. In aggression for security the immediate motivation is the desire to retain some desirable good such as possessions, power, life, liberty, etc., and these in turn are desired for the sake of sense pleasure

or self-esteem, with the latter once again predominating.

Testimony Supporting the Self-Esteem Theory of Aggression

The self-esteem theory of aggression maintains that all aggression (behavior aimed at overcoming obstacles to the agent's desires) arises from the motives of self-esteem and sense pleasure. Anger-inspired aggression is an attempt to recoup a self-esteem loss. Even though the immediate triggering cause of the anger be a matter of sense pain (someone steps on your toes), still it is the affront to your self-esteem which is the ultimate cause of the anger. We have seen that Aristotle and Aquinas support this analysis of the cause of anger.

In this section we will adduce further support for the self-esteem theory of aggression from several authorities. Most explicit and detailed concurrence is a book by Gregory Rochlin, psychiatrist, devoted to the thesis that all aggression arises from wounded self-esteem. This coincides with our explanation of anger-inspired aggression, but Rochlin does not include non-angry aggression for gain. We will also consider statements by Augustine, Freud, Adler, Lorenz and Fromm which lend support to the self-esteem theory of aggression.

Rochlin on Aggression

Gregory Rochlin, practicing psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, and professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical

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School, in his book Man's Aggression: The Defense of the Self develops the theme that all aggression springs from wounded narcissism. By narcissism he means not some abnormal absorption in self, found only in disturbed persons, but the self-love which dominates the lives of all of us. Rochlin identifies it as "an endless lust for a rewarding self-image."[1] Throughout, he equates narcissism with self-esteem. Or rather, with our desire for self-esteem.

When self-esteem is wounded, we are seized with an eagerness to repair the damage, by evening the score with the offender. Aggression is the result.

> What may threaten our accomplishments, imperil our relationships, or deny us rewards risks lowering self-respect--endangers narcissism. In defense against such hazards, and as the instruments of recovery, aggression issues.[2]

> Neither metaphor nor a mere label, narcissism, this love of self, is the human psychological process through which preserving the self is assured. In infancy, childhood, maturity and old age, the necessity of protecting the self may require all our capabilities. And, when narcissism is threatened, we are humiliated, our self-esteem is injured, and aggression appears.[3]

Although I can find no formal definition of aggression in Rochlin's excellent book, the various examples he gives suggest that by aggression he means an impulse to injure another. The impulse may be conscious or unconscious, justified or unjustified, carried to fruition or repressed or thwarted.

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[1]Gregory Rochlin, Man's Aggression: The Defense of the Self (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1973), p. 1.

[2]Ibid., preface. [3]Ibid., p. 1.

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Is aggression always the result of injured self-esteem, or does Rochlin see other causes that may lead to aggression? I find in his book no mention of other causes that may lead to aggression, and the general tenor of his book, as well as the following passage, lead one to the conclusion that he is proposing injured self-esteem as the only cause of aggression:

> Aggression always issues--although unconsciously we may distort or symbolize the form it takes--as a reaction to threatened or actually damaged narcissism, whether the loss of our self-esteem is provoked by our own hostility, doubts and demands, or by some sense that others doubt, hate or otherwise seem to devalue and abuse us.[1]

Of course, the above paragraph can be interpreted either in the sense that injured self-esteem is always (the only) cause of aggression, or in the sense that whenever self-esteem is injured, aggression always results. Actually, Rochlin seems to hold both positions: not only is wounded self-esteem the only cause of aggression, but aggression necessarily results when self-esteem is wounded. The fact that he frequently reiterates the central theme that wounded self-esteem is the cause of aggression, with no mention of any other possible cause, leads logically to the conclusion that he considers injured self-esteem to be the only cause of aggression. And as to the conclusion that whenever self-esteem is injured, aggression inevitably follows, we have:

> In short, the same principle holds true whether in psychosis or in the common course of everyday life: whatever

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[1]Ibid., p. 120.

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> injures self-esteem unconsciously intensifies and generates aggression in its defense.[1]

And:

> In the years of early childhood, when a sense of self-esteem is newly unfolding, deprivation of whatever sort, even in a dream or a fantasy unfulfilled, may be consciously experienced as a loss or lowering of self-esteem, and aggression inevitably issues in some form.[2]

Rochlin points out that not only does an affront to our self-esteem arouse feelings of aggression within us, but the very feelings of aggression may be a further menace to our self-esteem. We do not like to see ourselves as hostile, aggressive people; we especially wish to dissociate ourselves from the feelings of violence and hatred we sometimes harbor toward those we should love. To free ourselves from guilt feelings about this, self-esteem demands that we subconsciously hide from ourselves our aggressive impulses. This we do by a variety of defense mechanisms--over-compensation leading to excessive solicitude for the other, repression, projection, etc. One of the most satisfying is projection of the hostile feelings on to others, becoming convinced that they want to harm us. This enables us to justify and now admit our hostile impulses toward the other.

> Unconscious "mechanisms of defense" against our own prohibited wishes or impulses, especially the aggressive ones, create the ordinary and inevitable conflicts in our daily lives. The persistent need to disclaim aggressive inclinations and to dissociate ourselves from them is common. It is a process which begins in young children. Of necessity, those nearest at hand, usually

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[1]Ibid., p. 120. [2]Ibid., p. 50.

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> one's family, are the principal objects of hostility. It may not be voiced, may be kept wholly in fantasy, and may even remain entirely unconscious, yet the child may claim that aggressive intentions are held by others and that he must be protected from that menace. Only then may giving vent to his aggression be justified, guilt be mitigated, and self-esteem be raised rather than lowered.[1]

The author accepts the Freudian doctrine that aggressive impulses against others, when repressed, are turned against self, and issue in various forms of self-destructive activity. He also makes some observations which provide a clue as to the mechanism by which this process takes place. First, the general principle is that we are moved to aggressive action against whoever injures our self-esteem. But when persons close to us have been the cause of the injury, our self-image of being a kind, benevolent, forgiving person may inhibit us from carrying out a vengeful aggression against them, and we may even repress into the unconscious our hateful impulses. Acts of aggression against the offender, which normally serve to restore self-esteem by "getting even," are thus forestalled and this avenue to self-esteem recoup is blocked. Further, the self is aware, consciously or subconsciously, of the forbidden feelings of hatred, and the self-esteem is further lowered by this glimpse of a hateful monster lurking within one's bosom. At this point it is self which is now responsible for lowering its self-esteem. The general principle that we tend to take aggressive action against anyone responsible for injuring self-esteem now asserts itself, and the individual takes aggressive action

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[1]Ibid., p. 164.

against himself, in any of a variety of forms--self-deprecation, self-hatred, self-destructive life styles, even suicide may result.

> The course of depression in daily life, as in clinical disorder, is governed principally by the direction aggression takes. With the fall in self-esteem, without which depression does not occur, hostility begins. Whether it is directed at oneself or is aimed at others is mediated by the super-ego. When justification is found for hostility, the license for aggression toward others issues as legitimate. On the other hand, without such a grant of permission, aggression may still arise, but then it is directed inward and the self suffers.[1]

> The injury, however, to narcissism from one's own self-criticism constitutes a menace within us. And as always it provokes our aggression. In our unconscious need to dissociate ourselves from aggression, we may project our aggressiveness to others, claim they hold us at fault, and thus justify our anger, or we may turn it directly to destroy ourselves.[2]

> Whether as self-immolation or in fantasies of self-denigration, the force of aggression turned against oneself is well known, and suicidal wishes are probably no less common to our experience than they were either in antiquity or among aborigines. Nevertheless, there is surprisingly little in scientific literature to show us that self-destruction is part of the psychology of everyday life and not confined to its extremes and exceptions in suicidal acts.[3]

Using these principles, Rochlin concludes to a theory of suicide which agrees with our own (presented in the next chapter). This postulates that the suicide is moved by self-esteem considerations: the "despair" type of suicide is motivated by a desire to escape from an intolerably painful self-esteem loss from which the individual sees no hope of recovery, and the "heroic" type of suicide is motivated by

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[1]Ibid., p. 202. [2]Ibid., p. 162.

[3]Ibid., p. 184.

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a desire to win approval from self and others.

> The common denominator is suicide which the hero shares with the villain is in the wish to quit life. The aim in either case is the sacrifice of oneself. And it is dictated by feeling less worthy than if the self were preserved. What may appear to be a resignation to death, either through suicide or a heroic death, is in actuality a dread of the degradation of the self from which there is no expectation of recovery. The need to redeem oneself from ignominy is the compelling and governing wish. To give up one's life to satisfy one's narcissism on the surface may appear to be a contradiction. But, of the two, it seems narcissism is the more important. The self is best served through maintaining self-regard. If in order to do so, life must be forfeited, the risk to our existence comes from whatever menaces our narcissism.[1]

Rochlin does not see aggression, nor the injured self-esteem which is its source, as always a bad thing. In some cases it can lead the individual to beneficial change in himself and to greater achievement:

> It would seem a matter of common sense that injured self-esteem endlessly creates a menace which finds expression in both social and inner conflicts. A live possibility in even our most perfunctory and inconspicuous daily encounters, this phenomenon has nonetheless never received the serious attention it deserves. Its wider dynamic implications are virtually unknown: it is not merely aggression but rather the lifelong corrosive effects on self-esteem that may promote restitution from loss, creativity from a sense of deprivation, and success from failure. Aggression is thus the implement of change.[2]

> The important point is that aggression is not mobilized principally for defense against an opposing world. When it is not urgently called on for defense against feared or actual narcissistic injuries, it is allowed to be freely engaged in a variety of functions such as mastery, skill, invention and creativity.[3]

The frustration theory of aggression Rochlin regards as inadequate. It assumes that aggression springs from some

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[1]Ibid., p. 15. [2]Ibid., p. 120. [3]Ibid., p. 202.

consciousness of frustration, whereas in some cases the source of aggression may be an unconscious process. Also, the notion of frustration is too limited in its scope to account fully for aggression.

> When further "failures" occur--the actual loss of someone needed or loved, or not being rewarded with the care and affection, and, later, the praise or distinction we require (or, as children, inordinately wish)--our narcissism, our sense of self is injured. And such injuries to narcissism tend to turn us back toward the self-contained primary state. To consider these experiences as simply specific instances of frustration places the emphasis on the individual's consciousness of being thwarted or checked. That emphasis is misplaced, however, when it is the entire process which invariably generates and includes an unconscious response, which calls for our attention here. Moreover, the notion of frustration applied to injured narcissism tends to offer a reduction of a complex and far-reaching conflict to be conceived of as a mere response to a trick of fortune.[1]

> Beginning in our earliest years, when we first meet defeat, it is a blow that falls on our self-love, which is to say on our "completely egoistic" aims. The injury is to narcissism. Our self-regard invariably suffers. To restore ourselves we make use of aggression. These commonplace experiences are a far cry from mere frustration. Nor are they adequately covered by the present Freudian theory of narcissism.[2]

By his last remark, that the present Freudian theory of narcissism is inadequate, Rochlin means that neither Freud nor his orthodox followers have appreciated the full scope of narcissism nor the central role that it plays in our behavior.

This overwhelming dominance of narcissism--the desire for self-esteem--in our lives is stressed by Rochlin near the end of his book:

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[1]Ibid., p. 6. [2]Ibid., p. 163.

> The conflicts of narcissism may isolate us or make us social, keep us egocentric or draw us to be with others. They may hold us to dread change, or they may carry us to be revolutionaries. They may cause us to be charitable and grand, or they may incite us to violence and murder. Narcissism begins its rule in our earliest period and continues its reign to our end. The tyranny of narcissism is the human condition.[1]

Self-esteem is more important to us than life itself:

> To give up one's life to satisfy one's narcissism on the surface may appear to be a contradiction. But, of the two, it seems narcissism is the more important. The self is best served by maintaining self-regard. If in order to do so, life must be forfeited, the risk to our existence comes from whatever menaces our narcissism.[2]

Additional testimony supporting the self-esteem theory

From the most prestigious of psychologists, Dr. Freud himself, we get the testimony that aggression arises from the desire for sense pleasure and self-esteem. His view that aggression is sometimes in the service of the erotic urge, as in sadism, is well known. Not so publicized is his recognition that aggression also flows from the ego's desire for a feeling of omnipotence. Speaking of the death instinct, which when directed outward takes the form of external aggressiveness, he says:

> But even when it emerges without any sexual purpose, in the blindest fury of destructiveness, we cannot fail to recognize that the satisfaction of the instinct is accompanied by an extraordinarily high degree of narcissistic enjoyment, owing to its presenting the ego with a fulfillment of the latter's old wishes for omnipotence.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 248. [2]Ibid., p. 15.

[3]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 68.

The ego's desire for a return to the infant's primal feeling of omnipotence--Freud's terms--is a manifestation of its desire for a sense of possession of excellence, power being one aspect of excellence. Sense of possession of excellence is by definition, self-esteem.

Freud's arch-rival, Alfred Adler, seldom expressing explicit agreement with his former mentor, concurs on this point. Instead of using the term omnipotence, he uses the equivalent expression of "close to God," by which he means being God-like in power:

> In cases of suicide we can make similar observations. After long training such individuals forego any interest in life and are filled with the thought of attracting general attention through their suicide and of achieving thus, like a murderer, a heightened feeling of superiority. ("I have done what not everyone could do. Formerly nobody took any notice of me; but now . . .") To be master over life and death brings them close to God, as it does the murderer who disposes of the lives of others.[1]

Thus Adler sees the self-aggressor, the suicide, and the murderer as motivated by the desire for a heightened sense of superiority. Feeling superior to others is one aspect of a sense of excellence possessed, i.e., of self-esteem.

Adler sees the self-esteem motivation also in those who participate willingly in war. Speaking of volunteers he says:

> From then on they felt easier; they had found the desire escape. Now they were no longer whipped dogs exposed

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[1]Alfred Adler, The Individual Psychology of Alfred Adler, eds. Heinz L. Ansbacher and Rowena R. Ansbacher (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc., 1967), p. 151.

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> against their will to the rain of bullets, but heroes and defenders of the Fatherland and of their own honor. After all, they themselves had uttered the call to war, and thus they went into the holy battle as defenders of the right in the intoxication of their regained self-esteem. Thus, in the attempt to find themselves again at any price, they were freed by a psychological device from the feeling of deepest humiliation and degradation, and evaded the realization that actually they were but the sorry victims of the power urges of others. They dreamed of self-willed and self-sought deeds of heroism.[1]

Some penetrating insights into the problem of aggression are offered in the book Autocracy and Democracy, by White and Lippitt. The reader will perceive that the causes for aggression discovered by the authors are expressions of a desire for a sense of one's own worth.

> The interpretation to be presented here is, in brief, that an impulse to aggression is likely to occur whenever ego needs are specially strong and no other ways of satisfying them are, at the moment, psychologically available. Such aggression is, in a sense, a short cut to a feeling of importance--a leap, often illusory, into the goal region of triumphant self-assertion.[2]

> Aggression is a major manifestation, but only one manifestation, of more fundamental ego needs, the goals of which are importance in the eyes of others and an inner sense of power to cope with the environment. . . .
>
> In what sense, now, can their aggression be called a "short cut to a feeling of importance"?
>
> It was a short cut in that, while giving them an immediate and vivid sense of their own power and importance, it did not, in any longer time perspective, increase their actual power or importance at all. It was a quick cashing in on certain kinds of power--the power to insult and hurt and destroy--that they already had. Like a self-glorifying day dream, it gave immediate ego gratification with no realistic thought about the relation of means to ends. . . .

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[1] Ibid., p. 459.

[2] Ralph K. White and Ronald Lippitt, Autocracy and Democracy (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1960), p. 162.

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> This hypothesis puts the frustration-aggression hypothesis in a new light. Why does frustration so often lead to aggression? One major reason now appears to be that frustration, if it is felt as personal failure, is always a blow to self-esteem. Like being the victim of aggression, then, it mobilizes a need to restore self-esteem, and one way of restoring self-esteem is aggression.[1]

The authors noted that among the juveniles they studied there was a common tendency to pick one of their number as a "scapegoat" and concentrate aggression on this victim. Surprisingly, the usual scapegoat was not one of the weaker members of the group. The authors explain why this supports the self-esteem theory of aggression, rather than competing "blowing off steam" or "displaced aggression" theories:

> At the same time, it also seems likely that the weaklings were not attacked partly because asserting physical superiority over them would add nothing to self-esteem or to status. Status and self-esteem are essentially relative, and to assert a relative superiority which is already taken for granted by all of the group can therefore (if the individual still has a grip on reality) do little or nothing to enhance or restore status. But when Jack the Giant Killer kills his first giant, his status is enormously enhanced. This way of looking at the problem brings out more clearly the difference between the blowing-off-steam hypothesis and the displaced-aggression hypothesis, on the one hand, and the ego-need hypothesis on the other. If the only requisite were to "blow off steam" or to "displace aggression," the easiest and safest object of aggression would presumably always be the one chosen; but if the need is for a restoration of status or of self-esteem, the chosen object is likely to be one who, without being actually too formidable, nevertheless has some aspect that is--or can be made to appear--strong and dangerous.[2]

To the objection that nations sometimes persecute weak minorities, the authors point out that such persecution

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[1] Ibid., pp. 164-5.

[2] Ibid., p. 166.

is invariably accompanied by propaganda that makes the minority seem to be a powerful menace.

In the same vein is Konrad Lorenz' "I can lick you" model for the aggressive instinct in man. He views the aggressive instinct in man as a struggle for personal dominance:

> So my book should have been titled On Aggressivity, not On Aggression, and certainly not On Violence. Now let's forget that word and refer to it as "I can lick you" behavior.
>
> If you put together two little boys, two fish of one species, two roosters, two monkeys, they will behave exactly as Mark Twain describes a meeting between Tom Sawyer and a new boy. The first words Tom says are "I can lick you," and the inevitable fight ends just as soon as one boy hollers "'Nuff!" It's not a drive to kill another person, but the drive to lick him into submission. It has to do with rank order or territory, and not with a killing instinct.[1]

Adler, were he able to see this description, would exclaim "Ah yes, a perfect description of the striving for superiority!" Which indeed it is. This striving for rank order, for dominance, for superiority, to lick the other person, can also be considered a perfect example of the striving for self-esteem.

Erich Fromm sees malignant aggression as motivated by the aggressor's desire to escape from a feeling of impotence and gain a sense of his own worth, i.e., self-esteem. Fromm divides malignant aggression into sadism and necrophilia. The latter is, in this case, not necessarily a sexual perversion but merely a love for death, as opposed

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[1]Richard I. Evans, "Conversation with Konrad Lorenz," Psychology Today, November 1974, p. 89.

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to biophilia, a love for life, which is what the "good guys" of this world have. Without going into any distinction between sadism and necrophilia, here are the motivations that Fromm ascribes to the two.

> Sadism has essentially no practical aim; it is not "trivial" but "devotional." It is transformation of impotence into the experience of omnipotence; it is the religion of psychic cripples.[1]

> He is sadistic because he feels impotent, unalive, and powerless. He tries to compensate for this lack by having power over others, by transforming the worm he feels himself to be into a god.[2]

Similarly with necrophilia:

> The psychical necessity for the development of necrophilia as a result of crippledness must be understood in reference to man's existential situation, as I discussed earlier. If man cannot create anything or move anybody, if he cannot break out of the prison of his total narcissism and isolation, he can escape the unbearable sense of vital impotence and nothingness only by affirming himself in the act of destruction of the life that he is unable to create.[3]

Finally, Augustine, in describing types of aggression, mentions the three that we have already considered as embracing all acts of aggression, namely aggression for revenge (anger), aggression for gain, and aggression for security, and then adds two which we had failed to consider.

> One may also consider the various cases of sin, when there is a wish to hurt another person, either by insulting him or by injuring him. The motive may be either revenge, as in the case of one enemy against another; or to gain something which belongs to someone else, as with highwaymen against travelers; or to avoid trouble, as when one attacks someone whom one fears; or

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[1]Fromm, Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 323.

[2]Ibid., p. 326.

[2]Ibid., p. 407.

> envy, as when the less fortunate turns against the more fortunate, or when the man who has been successful in something fears the prospect or is angry at the fact of having an equal; or simply the pleasure of seeing others suffer, as in the cases of those who watch gladiators or who mock and make fun of other people.[1]

We have already considered how the first three types are traceable to the desire for self-esteem and sense pleasure. The latter two, envy and pleasure in seeing another suffer, can be seen to be self-esteem motivations: we estimate our own excellence by comparison with others, not entirely but as the most frequent standard. By this standard the downfall or disaster which befalls another points up our own relatively fortunate situation. We are made thus more vividly aware of the excellence we possess, i.e., our self-esteem is increased. Contrarily, the success of another can be offensive to us in that it tends to make our conception of our own status dwindle by comparison. These are despicable motivations, envy and Schadenfreude, and we attempt to root them out of our innermost feelings, but who will be so presumptuous as to vouch that he is free from them?

Does Man Have an Innate Instinct for Aggression?

"Man is a wolf to man," homo homini lupus, first said by Plautus in the second century B.C., has summed up the views of writers down through the centuries who believe that man has an innate propensity for savagery toward his fellow man. Some writers convey the impression that this opinion

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[1]Augustine, Confessions of St. Augustine (New York: Mentor-Omega Book, New American Library, 1963), p. 63.

about man's natural cruelty was a product of Christian teaching, with its emphasis on original sin. However, the opinion seems to have been common among ancient writers not shaped by Christian influence. Writing in an age when Christians were a despised minority and without cultural influence, the great biographer Plutarch (fl. 100 A.D.) said "no beast is more savage than man, when possessed with power answerable to his rage." Natural historian Pliny and satirist Juvenal, writing about 100 A.D., concur that no wild animals are so destructive of their species as is man. Such men were hardly influenced by Christian ideas about the sinfulness of man, for as historian Gibbon remarks:

> Yet all of these sages [Seneca, Pliny elder and younger, Tacitus, Plutarch, Galen, Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius] (it is no less an object of surprise than of concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman Empire. Those among them who condescend to mention the Christians consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning.[1]

To an objection that destructive aggressiveness is not innate to human nature but is merely a learned response, these writers of antiquity might respond with an indulgent smile, pointing out the universality of savagery in all the cultures known to them and in all of recorded human history.

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[1]Edward Gibbon, The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (New York: Washington Square Press, Inc., 1963), p. 138.

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Throughout most of the Christian era the view has predominated among both Christians and secularists that man has a cruel streak in his nature. We will not dwell on the plethora of statements about the corruption of human nature, coming from the pens of religious writers, obscure and great, Catholic and Protestant. Consider instead such diverse personalities and ideologues as Voltaire and American president John Adams agreeing on this point of human brutality. John Adams, writing 13 years before the American Revolution, expresses his distaste for "a certain set of sentiments have been lately so fashionable, that you could go into few companies without hearing such smart sayings as these--'if a man should insult me, by kicking my shins, and I had a sword by my side I would make the sun shine through him,' . . . 'should a man offer a sudden insult to them, they could not answer for themselves but they should lay him prostrate at their feet in his own blood.'"[1] Adams offers such sentiments as deplorable evidence of man's innate instinct for savagery:

> Let me conclude, by advising all men to look into their own hearts, which they will find to be deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.[2]

In almost the same year, Voltaire, "whom one could not suspect of deference to a theological tradition," writes:

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[1]John Adams, Life and Works of John Adams (Boston: Charles C. Little, 1851), p. 439.

[2]Ibid., p. 443.

> Men in general are foolish, ungrateful, jealous, covetous of their neighbor's goods; abusing their superiority when they are strong, and tricksters when they are weak. . . . Power is commonly possessed, in States and in families, by those who have the strongest arms, the most resolute minds and the hardest hearts. From which the moralists of all ages have concluded that the human species is of little worth; and in this they have not departed widely from the truth.[1]

In our own day, Freud's delving into the human psyche led him to strong conclusions on this point:

> The element of truth behind all this, which people are so ready to disavow, is that men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved, and who at the most can defend themselves if they are attacked; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments are to be reckoned a powerful share of aggressiveness. As a result, their neighbour is for them not only a potential helper or sexual object, but also someone who tempts them to satisfy their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without compensation, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and to kill him. Homo homini lupus. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? . . . In circumstances that are favourable to it, when the mental counter-forces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien.[2]

Puritan divine Cotton Mather could not have stated the case in stronger terms.

Konrad Lorenz presents a considerably meliorated version of innate aggressive instinct. He sees a rough parallel between the sexual instinct and the aggressive instinct: both are needs which build up in the individual and seek

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[1]Arthur O. Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1961), p. 6.

[2]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 58.

discharge. He concedes that aggressive behavior can be learned by the individual and that certain environments stimulate aggression more than do others, but he maintains that neither training nor environmental change can eliminate the aggressive urge:

> If you withhold all aggression-eliciting environmental situations, you cannot hope that the need to discharge cumulative, built-up aggression will atrophy. . . . I should be surprised if cutting off all aggression-eliciting factors produced a nonaggressive child . . . . Many studies show that children in a totally permissive, nonfrustrating environment are very aggressive.[1]

However, instead of the Freudian killer-cannibal model of innate aggressivity, Lorenz presents a relatively mild "Tom Sawyer," or personal dominance model:

> If you put together two little boys, two fish of one species, two roosters, two monkeys, they will behave exactly as Mark Twain describes a meeting between Tom Sawyer and a new boy. The first words Tom says are, "I can lick you," and the inevitable fight ends just as soon as one boy hollers, "'Nuff!" It's not a drive to kill another person, but the drive to lick him into submission. It has to do with rank order or territory, and not with a killing instinct.[2]

As mentioned previously, this "I can lick you" model of the aggressive instinct is obviously a matter of seeking self-esteem by superiority over another.

Supporting the view that aggressive behavior is a natural human instinct are observations about such behavior in infants. Augustine comments on this:

> It is clear, indeed, that infants are harmless because of physical weakness, not because of any innocence of

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[1]Evans, "Conversation with Konrad Lorenz," p. 93.

[2]Ibid., p. 89.

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> mind. I myself have seen and known a baby who was envious; it could not yet speak, but it turned pale and looked bitterly at another baby sharing its milk.[1]

Fifteen hundred years later, famed sociologist Charles Cooley comments on similar observations:

> Perez, speaking of children at about the age of two months, says, "they begin to push away objects that they do not like, and have real fits of passion, frowning, growing red in the face, trembling all over, and sometimes shedding tears." They also show anger at not getting the breast or bottle, or when washed or undressed, or when their toys are taken away. At about one year old "they will beat people, animals, and inanimate objects if they are angry with them," throw things at offending persons, and the like.
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> I have observed phenomena similar to these, and no doubt all have who have seen anything of little children. If there are any writers who tend to regard the mind at birth as almost tabula rasa so far as special instincts are concerned, consisting of little more than a faculty of receiving and organizing impressions, it must be wholesome for them to associate with infants and notice how unmistakable are the signs of a distinct and often violent emotion, apparently identical with the anger or rage of adults.[2]

Psychiatrist Leo Madow remarks on rage and aggressive behavior in babies:

> You might ask, "Do little babies really have so much feeling?" Have you ever seen a baby have a temper tantrum, or hold its breath, or bang its head against the wall? The tremendous resentment against being restrained can be seen in an infant who is physically prevented from moving his limbs when he wants to do so. The reaction of fury usually culminates in crying, the baby's common way of expressing anger.[3]

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[1]Augustine, Confessions, p. 24.

[2]Charles Horton Cooley, Human Nature and the Social Order (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), p. 264.

[3]Leo Madow, Anger (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 18.

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Psychologist David Levy points out that the usual reaction of children of age three to five to their infant sibling is one of hostility, usually successfully inhibited:

> In regard to sibling rivalry, however, the aggressive response to the new baby is so typical that it is safe to say it is a common feature of family life. . . . If it is a boy the question used to set off the behavior is: "And then the brother sees the new baby at the mother's breast. He never saw him before. What does he do?"
>
> In reviewing the patterns of over 100 S-R experiments of children ranging from two to thirteen years, it is most useful to conceive of the act as an ongoing social process, a dynamic unit of behavior, with various influences brought to bear upon it in every phase. The completed primitive performance is an act in which the child attacks the baby doll and destroys it by biting it, tearing it with his fingers, or crushing it with his feet. If the experiment is repeated, there is, in most of the instances at ages three, four and five, a fulfillment of hostile activity of this type.[1]

Psychiatrist Gregory Rochlin traces aggressive behavior to narcissism, and finds children to be purest types of both:

> It is noteworthy that the most rewarding insights about narcissism and aggression have not come, as Freud thought they would, from a study of schizophrenia, or the "paraphrenias" as they were called at the time, the best known narcissistic states or disorders. Instead, we have learned most about aggression, and even narcissism, from studies of young children. They are the supreme narcissists, and they can be merciless tormentors.[2]

Dr. Madow says in the same vein:

> The cruelest tormentors of all are other children, because they also have pent-up anger that they cannot let out on adults and so choose a safer substitute. They

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[1]David M. Levy, "The Hostile Act," in Understanding Human Motivation, Rev. Ed. (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1965), p. 353.

[2]Rochlin, Man's Aggression, p. 11.

> laugh at another child, because they themselves could have done the same and they are relieved that they did not. People often say that children are cruel because they don't know any better, yet if you observe the children themselves closely, you will find they know exactly what they are doing.[1]

The proponents of the aggression-is-innate view would maintain that in the light of the foregoing evidence it requires a faith as dedicated as it is blind to continue to hold that man does not have an innate instinct for aggression.

However, the prevailing opinion in academic circles seems to be that man does not have an innate instinct for aggression. Since the word instinct sometimes raises semantic difficulties, let us say also that the prevailing opinion is that man does not have an inborn urge, drive, propensity, inclination toward aggression. Freud experienced the storm of angry dissent that his views about a destructive instinct aroused. Lorenz has experienced the same in our own time. Ranged against the innate-aggression view are those who believe that man's nature is necessarily good, indeed a comforting faith, and therefore cannot harbor urges of violence toward neighbor, and also those who hold that human nature is almost totally a tabula rasa, to be molded into whatever shape environment and training shall dictate. Allied of course are those who proclaim that there is no such thing as human nature. Freud attributed his opposition to such diverse factions as religionists--"God has made them in the

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[1]Madow, Anger, p. 19.

image of his own perfections"[1] and communists, who maintain the "untenable illusion" that "man is wholly good and well-disposed toward his neighbour; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature."[2] To these opponents Freud could add the behaviorists and learning theorists.

Lovejoy comments that although it has been a predominant tendency throughout most of human history to regard human nature with misgivings, the contrary optimistic view has been in the ascendancy in recent years, beginning its rise about the time of the American Revolution and continuing to a peak in the Victorian Era, when the belief that man is "naturally good" became a widely accepted premise alike of politics and pedagogics; the taste for satire largely went out of fashion in literature, and the sense of sin rather largely in religion; and to express a "low view" of human nature became a kind of odious blasphemy.[3] The reaction of the academic world to Lorenz indicates that the Victorian optimism is still strong, bolstered by a Skinnerian confidence that man can be shaped into whatever sort of being the behavior modifiers desire.

One of the earliest proponents of the optimistic view was a British monk named Pelagius, contemporary with Augustine and his opponent in theological discussions.

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[1]Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 67.

[2]Ibid., p. 60.

[3]Lovejoy, Reflections on Human Nature, p. 7.

Pelagius held that man's nature is good, although capable of choosing evil, and that any evil propensities we see in human behavior, including man's inhuman treatment of his fellows, comes not from man's nature but from bad habits learned in childhood:

> First of all, then, you ought to measure the goodness of human nature by the author of that nature, namely God, who, when he made the world and the things that are in the world, is reported to have made them as good, in fact very good. . . .
> No other cause, in fact, is responsible for our difficulty in well doing than the long habit of sinning which infects us from childhood. Little by little that habit has corrupted us through many years, and finally it holds us so tied and bound to itself that it seems, in a way, to possess the very power of nature. The weight of that whole time now resists and opposes us--that whole time when our instruction was neglected, when we were educated for sin, when we studied to be evil, when innocence was led in folly to the allures of wickedness. Now old habit opposes new will. In the ignorance which has come upon us through sloth and laxity, we wonder why holiness is being imposed upon us as if from some alien source (we who make no habit of doing good since we have learned evil so long.)[1]

In essence, setting aside the religious terms, Pelagius is saying that our tendency to mistreat our neighbor, as well as other undesirable forms of conduct, is not innate but learned.

Today Erich Fromm is one of the more prestigious and articulate opponents of the view that man has a mean streak in his nature. Fromm bases his arguments on a distinction between "benign aggression" and "malignant aggression." His description of the two:

> We must distinguish in man two <u>entirely different kinds of aggression</u>. The first, which he shares with

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[1]Pelagius, <u>Letter to Demetrias</u>.

> all animals, is a phylogenetically programmed impulse to attack (or to flee) when vital interests are threatened. This defensive, "benign" aggression is in the service of the survival of the individual and the species, is biologically adaptive, and ceases when the threat has ceased to exist. The other type, "malignant" aggression, i.e., cruelty and destructiveness, is specific to the human species and virtually absent in most mammals; it is not phylogenetically programmed and not biologically adaptive; it has no purpose, and its satisfaction is lustful. Most previous discussion of the subject has been vitiated by the failure to distinguish between these two kinds of aggression, each of which has different sources and different qualities.[1]

Fromm concedes that the propensity for benign aggression is indeed a part of human nature (phylogenetically programmed), but cruelty and destructiveness is not. Fromm maintains that Lorenz and others have failed to distinguish between benign aggression (biologically adaptive) and malignant aggression (cruelty and destructiveness) and has thus concluded that inasmuch as the first is innate, the second is also. He presents what he considers to be the reasoning of Lorenz and others:

> Let us take Lorenz as an example; his concept of aggression is originally that of a biologically adaptive, evolutionary developed impulse that serves the survival of the individual and of the species. But, since he applied "aggression" also to bloodlust and cruelty, the conclusion is that these irrational passions are also innate, and since wars are understood as being caused by pleasure in killing, the further conclusion is that wars are caused by an innate destructive trend in human nature. The word "aggression" serves conveniently as a bridge to connect biologically adaptive aggression (which is not evil) with human destructiveness which indeed is evil. The core of this kind of "reasoning" is:
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> Biologically adaptive aggression = innate
> Destructiveness and cruelty = aggression
> Ergo: Destructiveness and cruelty = innate. Q.E.D.[2]

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[1] Fromm, Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 24.

[2] Ibid., p. 19.

Fromm is prepared to agree with both the major and minor premises above, but biologically adaptive aggression is not to be equated with the term aggression in the minor premise. There, aggression means malignant aggression. Thus the syllogism has four terms and the conclusion does not follow.

The conclusion that destructiveness and cruelty are not a part of human nature offers hope for improvement of the human condition, Fromm maintains. Malignant aggression and even the necessity for benign aggression can be eliminated from the human scene, to a large extent. To accomplish this we must lay the axe to the root cause of malignant aggression, namely the social and economic and political conditions prevailing in capitalism and also in communism as it is now practiced. For the reduction of benign, or reactive, aggression he proscribes:

> The main condition is, of course, that neither individuals nor groups are threatened by others. This depends on the existence of material bases that can provide a dignified life for all men and make the domination of one group by another neither possible nor attractive. Such a condition could be realized in the foreseeable future by means of a different system of production, ownership, and consumption than the present one; . . .
>
> The establishment of a system that guarantees the provision of basic necessities for all means the disappearance of dominant classes. . . .
>
> Entirely new forms of decentralization must be devised, as well as new social and political structures that will put an end to the society of anomie, the mass society consisting of millions of atoms.
>
> None of these conditions are independent from each other. They are part of a system, and hence, reactive aggression can be reduced to a minimum only if the whole system as it has existed during the last six thousand

> years of history can be replaced by a fundamentally different one.[1]

Fromm does not spell out just what this fundamentally different system is which can offer hope for the elimination of man's destructive aggressiveness. Such characteristics of the new system as he occasionally gives correspond to "pure Marxism," as envisioned by Marx himself. Fromm is always laudatory in his references to Marx or his ideas, but feels that Socialist countries such as Russia and China have not correctly implemented Marx's ideas.

> Marx's concept of socialism, until now unrealized anywhere in the world (and certainly not in the Socialist countries), was not considered a utopia by him because he believed that at this point of historical evolution the material conditions for its realization were already present.[2]

The failure of the Socialist countries--as Fromm sees it--who professedly are following the Marxist prescription for bringing about the golden age of mankind, makes a Frommian hope for the reduction of destructive aggressiveness very remote indeed.

Fromm's distinction between benign and malignant aggressiveness offers a satisfying solution until one tries to apply it to practical cases. The recent daring Israeli raid into Uganda seems to stand out as a classic example of benign, defensive aggression. I feel confident that Fromm himself would agree with that characterization, as would the majority of the Western world. However, much of the Socialist world and the third world view the raid as arrogant

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[1]Ibid., pp. 244-5. [2]Ibid., p. 294.

"gunboat diplomacy," violating the sovereign rights of a developing nation--certainly an example of malignant, destructive aggression. By what criterion do we decide then, and who is to decide, whether this raid is benign adaptive aggression such as is part of human nature, or malignant aggression which is not part of human nature but a corruption of it? Again, certainly Fromm would agree that it was benign, adaptive, defensive aggression, innate to human nature, for the Allies to resist forcefully the encroachments by Hitler. And the bombings of German cities were a necessary part of that benign aggression. And the 1000 bomber saturation raids? And the fire-bombing of Dresden? And the holocaust at Nagasaki and Hiroshima? Were these aggressions a necessary, good part of human nature, or were they a corruption of human nature? In almost any example we choose, the answer may be simple and clear to the partisans of one side, and quite simple and clear, but exactly contrary, to the partisans of the other side.

Does It Matter Which View of Innate Aggression One Holds?

Is all this controversy about whether man has an innate propensity for aggression of any practical consequence, or is it merely ivory tower speculation, of no more import than the reputed dispute among medieval Scholastics about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin? (How gratifying it is to our modern self-esteem to patronize those flat-earth ignoramuses!) The parties to the modern

dispute are agreed as to its practical importance. They point out the imperative need for society to gain control over the megaton explosion of human aggression in recent years, and quite rightfully insist that no effective measures can be taken toward a solution if we are operating on a false assumption as to the radical cause for man's inhumanity to man. The nurture people charge that the nature people forestall any solution by throwing up their hands and saying "aggression is simply man's nature!" The nature people counter-charge that the nurture people sneer at the workable methods of controlling aggression, in their preoccupation with impractical utopian schemes for eliminating aggression. Freud asserts that belief in the goodness of human nature is an "evil illusion" which causes damage. Unfortunately he does not spell out just how he sees it as causing damage:

> Unfortunately what history tells us and what we ourselves have experienced does not speak in this sense but rather justifies a judgment that belief in the 'goodness' of human nature is one of those evil illusions by which mankind expect their lives to be beautified and made easier while in reality they only cause damage.[1]

One aspect of the "damage" that Freud had in mind might be the sentiment one sees on bumper stickers: "If it feels good, do it!" If human nature is good, then its impulses are good. If I feel the impulse to various sexual or aggressive acts, they must be good and I have a right to do them. Any restrictions of these acts are violations of my freedom. Fromm cites a pertinent passage in this regard:

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[1]Freud, Anxiety and Instinctual Life, p. 104.

> It has become quite fashionable among some politically radical thinkers, such as Herbert Marcuse, to praise sadism as one of the expressions of human sexual freedom. Marquis de Sade's writings are reprinted by politically radical journals as manifestations of this "freedom." They accept de Sade's argument that sadism is a human desire, and that liberty requires that men have the right to satisfy their sadistic desires and masochistic desires, like all others, if this gives them pleasure. . . .[2]

An extreme example of this was the attitude of Susan Atkins, member of the Manson family, whose leader had a rather detailed philosophy of life, one of the elements of which was faith in the innocence of human nature and its impulses. When her cell-mate asked Susan if she felt remorse for having killed Sharon Tate, Susan replied in the negative. She said that plunging the knife repeatedly into Sharon Tate was the most pleasurable experience she had ever had, "more fun than sex, and how can anything that feels so good be wrong?" Susan reputedly has undergone a religious conversion; it would be interesting to get her present views on this.

Although Fromm rejects the innate aggression theory, he does not believe that all the impulses of human nature are good:

> The argument that to follow one's desires is man's natural right and hence to be respected is very understandable from a rationalist, pre-Freudian viewpoint, which assumed that man only desires what is good for him, and therefore that pleasure is a guide for desirable action. But after Freud this argument sounds rather stale. We know that many of man's desires are irrational,

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[1]Fromm, Anatomy of Human Destructiveness, p. 314.

> precisely because they harm him (if not others) and interfere with his development.[1]

The Herbert Marcuse and Susan Atkins excesses are not aberrations of the "human nature is good" view but are actually its strictly logical conclusion, according to some opponents of that view. Even apart from these excesses, the "human nature is good" view lends itself to a justification of a relaxed sexual code contrary to traditional Christian morality, critics charge. Finally, "human nature is good" people are inclined to fritter away their world-improvement efforts in attempts to "change the system," unaware, critics say, of the truth that Freud enunciated, that in any new system the innate hostilities and aggressions will be present:

> . . . we cannot, it is true, easily foresee what new paths the development of civilization could take; but one thing we can expect, and that is that this indestructible feature of human nature will follow it there.[2]

The "human nature is good" people, and the tabula rasa people, all nurturists in that they believe that evil comes from nurture rather than nature, counter-charge that the innate-aggression people are apathetic or even hostile to those needed social changes which might reduce or eliminate man's inhumanity to man. Warfare, crime, and greed are learned activities and can be eradicated with proper social changes and training, but the major obstacle is the opposition

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[1] Ibid., p. 315.

[2] Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents, p. 61.

of the reactionaries who hold that human nature is corrupt. Observers have commented that the latter tend to be political conservatives, whereas the human-nature-is-good and tabula rasa people tend to be political liberals. It seems reasonable to suppose that the respective political positions flow to a large extent from the individual's basic views of human nature, rather than vice versa.

In the light of all of the above considerations I agree with both parties that one's opinion (usually implicit) about whether man has an innate urge to aggression is a matter of considerable practical importance.

"Innate Aggression" in the Light of the Self-Esteem Theory

In this question of innate aggressive urge we prefer to avoid the use of the word "instinct," for several reasons: the word is plagued with ambiguity, it arouses intense emotional opposition in some social scientists ("anyone who believes in instincts is a fascist"), and it is commonly associated with a bodily need, as in sex instinct or hunger instinct. Instead we will phrase the question "Does man have an innate motivation (urge, drive) to inflict harm on others?" aware of course that we have not thereby totally avoided ambiguity.

We must answer in the negative, man does not have an innate motivation to inflict harm on others, in the light of the self-esteem theory of human motivation. According to that theory, man's one root motivation (urge, drive) is to

seek an awareness of good possessed. That awareness may be sensate or "intellectual." Sensate awareness of good possessed is sense pleasure. Intellectual--psychic or psychological, if you prefer--awareness of good possessed is self-esteem. Thus, man's only innate motivations are to seek sense pleasure and self-esteem, the two forms of the one root motivation.

An innate motivation is one with which the infant is born, and which manifests itself in all individuals of whatever culture and at whatever time in human history. It does not have to be learned, although particular ways of expressing it may be learned. The drive to seek sense pleasure, and its negative aspect, to avoid physical pain, fits this description. This is not vitiated by the fact that sometimes persons act contrary to the desire for sense pleasure. Even though the motivation is present, and making itself felt, the individual can act contrary to it, influenced by the self-esteem motivation.

The self-esteem motivation also seems to fit the description of innate motivation. In every culture of which I am aware, human beings seek self-esteem (pride, face, self-respect, sense of worth, etc.). Can you think of any recorded history or ancient or modern literature that is not concerned with human beings seeking self-esteem? But can we say that the new-born infant has this urge? Perhaps not in the same actualized form that he has the drive for sense

pleasure, but we suggest that the infant does have the self-esteem motivation in potential, just as he has an intellect in potential. Whether the infant can actualize from birth his drive for a psychological awareness of good possessed is dubious. However some psychologists do find evidence of the drive for self-esteem at a very early age. In Your Child's Self-Esteem author Dorothy Briggs presents the message: "Today, enough evidence has accumulated to give you just such a formula [for happiness]: if your child has high self-esteem, he has it made."[1] The author locates self-awareness as emerging at about 15 to 18 months.

> Prior to learning the meaning of words, then, each infant busily gathers the thousands and thousands of impression about himself that come from the body language of others. These impressions don't jell into clear-cut statements about himself as a person until later. But this fact in no way subtracts from their importance; because later messages rest on them, they pack a mighty wallop.[2]

> Finally, he learns his own name. Now he has a symbol for thinking of himself apart from others. This breakthrough is a huge step forward. It allows him to associate qualities with himself just as he did earlier with things. He can say, "Pete hot" or "Pete hurt" or "Pete big." Now he can talk about, describe, and judge himself. He can think of himself in comparison with others, "Me bigger than Bobby," and in terms of time, "Pete go by-by soon."
>
> Around fifteen to eighteen months, Pete gets an inkling of his separateness, but it's hazy. Full awareness will not hit until two or two-and-a-half. Prior to this time, however, his name gives him a kind of frame on which to hang various descriptive labels. First through his senses and then through language, every child builds his picture of himself.[3]

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[1]Dorothy Corkille Briggs, Your Child's Self-Esteem (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1975), p. 2.

[2]Ibid., p. 12. [3]Ibid., p. 10.

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Dr. Gregory Rochlin states:

> Far in advance of conflicts arising from sensuous experience, those associated with narcissism and aggression in relation to those emotionally most important to us begin to have a profound effect on our entire early development. This follows from the self-transforming quality which characterizes human life; self-awareness, self-criticism, self-estimation and self-esteem are all actively developing in our youngest years. These activities engage the small child to a degree that fully substantiates the proposition that whatever else he may be he is also a little Narcissus.[1]

In short, as soon as the child develops self-awareness he seeks awareness of self as possessor of good, i.e., self-esteem. The drive for self-esteem is innate, then, in the same sense that self-awareness is innate--as a potential present in all human infants, which will inevitably emerge in the normal course of development.

Other aspects of human behavior which are sometimes considered to be the result of innate urges--eating, drinking, sex, self-preservation, fear of loud noises, fear of falling, etc., are manifestations of the desire for sense pleasure (most often in its negative form, the desire to avoid physical displeasure), and of self-esteem. We have developed previously the theme that the urge for self-preservation is, in man, principally a matter of self-esteem considerations.

The self-esteem theory of human motivation, then, does not admit of an innate urge toward aggression in the sense of inflicting injury upon others. Nor, strictly speaking, does it posit an innate urge toward aggression in the broadest

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[1]Rochlin, Man's Aggression, p. 21.

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sense, i.e., activity aimed at removing obstacles to the agent's desires. However, this activity aimed at removing obstacles is such an integral part of achieving any desire that it can in effect be considered innate. The infant has an innate urge to satisfy his desire for sucking and he will attempt to push aside an obstacle between him and his mother's breast. He has an innate urge to be comfortable, and will seek to get rid of wet and cold objects pressing against him. This tendency to avoid or eliminate offensive stimuli can lead the child to behavior that will inflict harm on others. The infant's obvious and continued rejection of the attentions of an adoring aunt may hurt her feelings. The infant may even throw something at an offensive face, with possible physical injury.

As the child grows older his effectiveness in removing obstacles to his desires, and thus, in inflicting injury on others, increases. Thus, although there is not innate urge to inflict injury upon others, the child will naturally resort to this whenever it seems necessary for the satisfaction of his innate urges for sense pleasure and self-esteem. Behavior tending to inflict injury on others is not innate, but neither does it have to be learned, although of course particular ways of injuring others may be learned, and the tendency can be reinforced or diminished through learning.

But what of behavior with the clear <u>intention</u> of inflicting injury on another, as when children tease another, they obviously want to inflict the injury of annoyance on

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the victim. This behavior is not innate, in the light of the self-esteem theory, but it so easily and "naturally" flows from the self-esteem desire to feel superior to the other as to be "quasi-innate."

This distinction between innate and quasi-innate may seem to be a distinction without a difference, but perhaps a little reflection will show a real practical difference. Our desire for self-esteem, being innate, cannot be eradicated, just as the desire for sense pleasure and to avoid pain cannot be eradicated. Any apparent trends in the direction of eradicating the self-esteem drive are merely cases of channelizing it in more socially acceptable directions, or in directions more in accord with reality. However, the desire to inflict injury on another, either for revenge, for gain, for security, for envy or Schadenfreude, can be largely modified and eliminated--at least as far as conscious desires and behavior goes, but subconscious desires may be quite another matter. Through proper training, the self-esteem motivation can be used to influence the individual to consciously reject and avoid acting upon any desire to inflict injury upon others. As to the full extent to which this can be done, and the possible side-effects that may ensue, we are not ready to speculate at this time.

Thus, the fact that the urge to inflict injury upon others is only "quasi-innate" rather than innate offers a ray of hope--no, more than a ray, a broad spectrum of possibilities for the curtailment of the destructive aggressions

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that so plague mankind.

Summary of Chapter

Sigmund Freud held that the human organism has a death instinct, that is, an unconscious desire to return to its original state of inanimate matter, but at the time and in the manner chosen by the organism itself. When this instinct for self-destruction is externally oriented it expresses itself as hostility and aggression toward others. To the extent that the individual represses his destructive aggressiveness toward others, his self-destructive aggressions will increase. Although modern Freudians largely accept his concept of innate aggressive tendencies toward others, few accept his idea of the death instinct.

In Freud's theory the death instinct and the pleasure principle both are expressions of a principle which he variously calls the principle of stability, of constancy, and the Nirvana principle. This is the tendency for excitation centers in the psyche to discharge, that is, for psychic energy concentrations to diffuse themselves. This is the second law of thermodynamics, the concept of entropy. Thus entropy seems the basis for Freud's entire system. Sometimes in Freud's thought the ideal man seems to be the brutal primal father, who gives full vent to his sexual and aggressive instincts--"the true purpose of the human organism is to satisfy the needs of the id"--and sometimes the ideal man seems to be a scientist like Freud himself in whom the "soft

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voice of reason" has triumphed, and who has repressed to a large degree his sexual and aggressive urges. But such a man will be plagued by aggressive urges turned inward.

The frustration theory of aggression enjoys considerable vogue. Proposed by Dollard and Miller, et al, in 1939, it proposes that all aggression arises from frustration. By frustration the authors mean a goal-directed sequence of behavior. A popular corollary of this theory is that expression of aggression is a catharsis which diminishes subsequent aggressive tendencies. Critics charge that aggression can arise from sources other than frustration, as Dollard/Miller have defined frustration.

The self-esteem theory of aggression defines aggression as "behavior aimed at overcoming an obstacle to the agent's deisres." In this light, aggression can be socially beneficial as well as destructive. All aggression, beneficial or destructive, arises from the desire for self-esteem and/or sense pleasure. Aggression is basically of three types: anger-inspired aggression aiming at revenge, aggression for gain, and aggression for security. The first is motivated by a desire to recoup a wounded self-esteem; the latter two may be motivated by self-esteem alone or by a combination of self-esteem and sense pleasure. Concurring in this view of anger-inspired aggression are Aristotle and Aquinas. Many writers have had insights into the fact that the ultimate cause of aggression is self-esteem; among them are Freud himself, Adler, Fromm, and Gregory Rochlin.

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The question as to whether man has an innate urge to inflict injury upon others has been hotly agitated, with articulate and scholarly proponents on both sides. The question is one of serious practical consequences. In the light of the self-esteem theory man does not have an innate urge to inflict injury upon others. However, such conduct appears almost as "second nature" in the striving to eliminate obstacles to the agent's self-esteem and sense pleasure desires. However, the fact that such destructive aggression is not innate offers considerable hope for the curtailment of man's inhumanity to man.

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CHAPTER VII

SUICIDE AND SELF-ESTEEM

The Self-Esteem Theory of Suicide

Any consideration of aggression is incomplete if it neglects the ultimate aggression against self—suicide. Suicides have exceeded homicides by 50 percent to 100 percent each year over the past forty years in the United States. Fortunately, the sharp increase in the homicide rate since 1955 (6.5 per 100,000 in 1955 to 11.0 in 1970)[1] has not been matched by a similar increase in the suicide rate. However, the latter, at 16.0[2] per 100,000, is still higher than the homicide rate. Using the self-esteem theory of human motivation, in combination with a bit of observation of the human scene and some reasoning, let us attempt to construct a theory of suicide. Then we will compare this with existing classic theories to see what consensus can be reached.

Inasmuch as the self-esteem theory proposes that all human behavior can be explained by the motives of sense

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[1] Information Please Almanac, 1974, ed. Dan Golenpaul (New York: Dan Golenpaul Associates, 1973), p. 745. These statistics are for 100,000 population 16 years of age and over.

[2] This figure of 16.0 is also for 100,000 population 16 years old and over. Later we will cite a figure of 11.0 suicides per 100,000 population total.

pleasure and self-esteem, we will attempt to discover whether these motives can explain the various types of suicide.[1]

Our first step is a definition of suicide.

Definition of Suicide

Dozens of different definitions of suicide have been presented by writers on the topic over the past century. Douglas[2] points out that most of these writers have been in the positivistic tradition of scientific thought, which looks with distrust upon common-sense thinking, and therefore they have made valiant efforts to avoid the common-sense, or "dictionary" definition of suicide. The result has been, as Douglas further remarks, that most of their definitions have emphasized the parts of the common-sense definition that harmonized with the writer's particular theory, and have

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[1]Even in cases of suicide that are classified as "temporary insanity" the person is acting from innate human motives. Considering fleetingly the intriguing question as to what constitutes insanity, is it primarily a tendency to ignore important elements of reality when making decisions, or might it be the degree to which one uses means disproportionate to the goals he has in mind? Perhaps the two amount to the same thing. Of course insanity is a matter of degree; no matter what definition one arrives at, each of us will fulfill that definition occasionally in some of our actions. Each of us has a propensity to ignore reality to the extent that we can get away with. Or think we can get away with. The defense mechanisms described by Freud, which we all use to one extent or another, are our attempts to ignore reality. But can these subterfuges be classified as small excursions into insanity? At times they seem to be such; at other times they definitely have survival value, the psychic equivalent of taking an aspirin or a tranquilizer.

[2]Jack D. Douglas, "The Absurd in Suicide," in On the Nature of Suicide, ed. Edwin S. Shneidman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1969), p. 112.

rejected those parts which pose difficulties for his theory. In practice, however, the professional men responsible for the compilation of suicide statistics and those who deal with suicidal patients fall back on the common-sense definition.[1] Douglas concludes: ". . . it is true that one common-sense meaning is far more frequently found than the others: that is, the intention to kill oneself."[2]

Perhaps Douglas' phrasing is a little imprecise here. Certainly common-sense does not consider the intention to kill oneself to be suicide. The intention must be implemented before we call it suicide. This may seem like nit-picking, but just such a slight imprecision in a definition can cause considerable logical problems in later discussion. We submit that the common-sense definition of suicide is "the intentional taking of one's own life."[3]

Durkheim, author of the monumental work on suicide, rejects this definition for two reasons. First, the intention is not easily observed, being an intimate interior matter, and how often we deceive even ourselves as to the true intentions for our acts. Also, how do we know that the victim actually intended his own death when he launched on the course of action that led to his death. Perhaps he intended to stop short of death and merely elicit sympathy and help. Further, Durkheim objects that the common-sense

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[1]Ibid., p. 113. [2]Ibid., p. 114.

[3]Funk and Wagnalls, New Desk Standard Dictionary, Emphatype Edition (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1948).

definition of suicide would not include as suicides the following: the soldier facing certain death to save his regiment, even though he does not want to die; the martyr dying for his faith; and the mother sacrificing herself for her child.[1] Durkheim considers such cases to be true suicides because the individual is renouncing his life. To qualify as suicide, it is immaterial whether the person actually desired death or merely accepted it as an unwanted consequence of some desirable course of action. Durkheim finalizes his definition:

> We may say then conclusively: the term suicide is applied to all cases of death resulting directly or indirectly from a positive or negative act of the victim himself, which he knows will product this result.[2]

Durkheim has rejected the concept of "intent to kill oneself" as being not easily observable. It seems that his concept of the "victim's knowledge that death will result" is subject to the same criticism. And really, does such criticism have cogency in either case? True, we cannot judge a person's motive or his knowledge from his actions with absolute certitude, but do we ever have absolute certainty in the particulars of human behavior? In any particular case of suicide, if we are required to make a decision about the victim's intention or knowledge, we must be content with a reasonable conjecture, based on available evidence.

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[1]Emile Durkheim, Suicide (New York: The Free Press, 1966), p. 43.

[2]Ibid., p. 44.

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Durkheim's further objection that the individual may not have intended his death when he began the fatal series of actions can also be applied as an objection against his "which he knows will produce this result."

Finally, his dictum that suicide must include all cases in which the agent undertakes a course that he knows will lead to his death, even though he does not want to die (the heroic soldier, the martyr, the self-sacrificing mother) seems to be quite arbitrary. He can answer that it is equally arbitrary to limit suicide to those cases where the victim intends his own death. Even so, the latter has the weight of common usage on its side. By common consent, suicide involves the desire to be rid of this life.

Can we say that by Durkheim's definition the person who realizes that his overeating will cause his death sooner than in the ordinary course of nature (and the man who shoots himself is merely causing his death sooner than in the ordinary course of nature) is committing suicide? It seems to fit. And the smoker and the drinker with awareness of the consequences of their actions are also to be classed as suicides. However comforting such a conclusion may be to those who love sensationalism, it must be admitted that the definition leaves so few people outside its scope that it becomes useless as an operational definition.

Although Durkheim rejects the common-sense definition of suicide, he is in the anomalous position of arriving at conclusions based on suicide statistics compiled by people

using the common-sense definition.

Actually, in Durkheim's detailed treatment of the various categories of suicide they all emerge as "common sense" suicides, that is, the individual has the intention of taking his own life. The various types of altruistic suicide—obligatory, optional, acute and military—show from the motivations that Durkheim attributes to them that the suicide intends to take his own life. A fortiori this is true of the egoistic, anomic and fatalistic suicides.

In our treatment of suicide, we intend the common-sense definition. Thus we are not considering cases of bravado, such as Russian roulette, in which one intends to impress others but hopes the gun will not fire, nor cases of delusion, when under the influence of hallucinogens a person attempts to fly from a tenth-floor window. Nor does our definition of suicide include the martyr who, rather than compromise his faith, chooses to allow others to put him to death. Also outside our definition is the case of a person who invites almost-certain death in an attempt to save others, but meanwhile hoping he will cheat the odds and survive. Finally, excluded also are "indirect suicides," that is, persons who engage in a life style that is very likely to hasten their death. Overeating, smoking, too much of any indulgence, reckless driving, etc., may seem suicidal to the impartial onlooker, but the individual involved is usually hoping to beat the odds. Rather than intending to end his life, he is interested in immediate gratifications and shuts

his mind to the damage he may be doing to himself.

A Theory of Suicide

It is our thesis that a person commits suicide when he is convinced that the self-esteem and sense-pleasure balance favors such action. Schopenhauer puts it: "It will generally be found that, as soon as the terrors of life reach the point at which they outweigh the terrors of death, a man will put an end to his life."[1] The person who faces years of agonizing pain from an incurable disease may decide that the balance favors a bullet in the brain now. The person who had built his self-worth concept on his bank balance and the prestige it brought (I'm worth three million dollars!), now bankrupt, decides to flee the pity and contempt from his associates by jumping out of a window. The young Japanese enlisting as a kamikaze pilot is swept along by visions of public glory and inner pride at the honor of dying for his country.

In most suicide cases it seems that sense-pleasure considerations play a minor role. We do not mean to minimize the powerful motivating effect of severe physical pain, but it does not play a part in the most frequent causes of suicide—financial loss and social rejection. What terrors are most apt to lurk in the back of our minds, giving rise to anxieties free floating or sharply defined? Are they not the terrors of being weighed and found wanting, of not measuring

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[1]Arthur Schopenhauer, The Essential Schopenhauer (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1962), p. 100.

up, of appearing in a bad light, of not making a good impression, of fear of failure, of loss of position and prestige, of loss of love and respect, of loss of our sense of being a worthwhile person? Even where physical pain seems to be an important factor, it is difficult to assess how much of the decision was due to inability to bear present and future pain, and how much was due to accompanying self-esteem considerations—"I'm no use, nothing but a burden to my family." Although bearing in mind that sense-pleasure does occasionally play a role in the suicide's decision, for instance, in the Epicurean egoistic suicide described by Durkheim, the role of self-esteem is such a dominant one that we will refer to our theory as the self-esteem theory of suicide.

Hope for the future is a vital consideration in any decision about committing suicide. In assessing his self-esteem balance (of course the individual does not explicate such terms) the suicidally inclined person will defer his act if he sees possibilities for significant improvement in his situation. Someone has said that "no one commits suicide who still has hope of being loved." "Where there is life there is hope," works equally well when transposed.

Another factor of importance in the decision of the self-proclaimed "worthless, unloved" individual whether or not to commit suicide is his estimation of what awaits him after death. He may envision death as oblivion and thus surcease from the sense of worthlessness that oppresses him, or he may believe he is stepping into a brighter and happier

existence. In either case he is more likely to take the step than is the person who is apprehensive—or even convinced—that he would be going from the frying pan into the fire. Hamlet in his soliloquy considers the advantages of suicide—an end to heartache, to the oppressor's wrongs, the proud man's contumely, the pangs of despised love, the scorn that the worthy man must suffer from the unworthy.[1] And why do not more men take this way to avoid the thousand shocks that flesh is heir to? The dread of something after death. This it is that makes us bear the ills we have rather than fly to those we know not of.

Thus our self-esteem theory of suicide can be stated quite simply: A person commits suicide when he becomes convinced that such a course of action will yield the greatest return in self-esteem. This includes the "heroic" or "altruistic" type of suicide that we will describe further when we consider Durkheim's theory of suicide. However, such altruistic suicides are so rare in contemporary Western society that we will center our considerations on the "I don't want to go on living" type of suicides which comprise almost the entirety of suicides in Western society. Our theory with regard to this type of suicide is: A person commits suicide when the following conditions are simultaneously fulfilled;

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[1] In passing, it is worth noting that the various causes for suicide mentioned by Hamlet—being oppressed, despised, a victim of contumely, and scorn—are obviously self-esteem depressants. The heartache that he mentions might be due to any of the foregoing causes.

his lack of self-esteem he considers too painful to be borne, he sees no likelihood of recouping his self-esteem, and he believes that suicide will end his present psychological pain.

Initial support for our theory comes from A. Alvarez, himself an attempted suicide, who in his celebrated book The Savage God seems to take it for granted that a wounded self-esteem is the essential feature in suicide when he says:

> For instance, a man may wish to kill only some aspect of himself under the illusion that its death will free some other part to live. In part he wishes to kill, in part to be killed. But in part death itself is incidental; what is at issue is not self-murder but an extreme act of placation which will restore some injured part of himself to health and enable it to flourish: "If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out." But for the suicide, overwhelmed by his obscure and obscuring sense of inner chaos and worthlessness, the "eye," the part, is life itself as he is leading it. He casts away his life in order properly to live."[1]

In the foregoing passage the author conveys the message that a sense of worthlessness is the endemic condition for all suicides. Of course he is now referring to the type of suicide that is a problem in Western society; the heroic kamikaze suicide is quite outside his area of concern. And the broader context of his passage is the suicide's desire to eliminate the part of himself that is lowering his self-esteem in order that, somehow, in some manner not verbalized nor understood nor even explicitly admitted by the suicide, the more esteemed part of himself may become unencumbered.

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[1]A. Alvarez, The Savage God (New York: Bantam Books, 1972), p. 102.

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Our self-esteem theory of "Western" suicide seems obviously true, an exercise in tautology, when we consider that people commit suicide because of the irremedial lack of some desired good, and also consider that self-esteem is the awareness of good possessed. The person's awareness of his hopeless situation with regard to the crucially desired good is then, by definition, a lack of self-esteem.

Hopefully, this will become increasingly clear as we consider the insights into suicide offered by various theorists, notably Freud, Adler and Durkheim, and apply our theory to explaining the various types of suicide mentioned by them.

Freud on Suicide

Freud's theory of the death instinct leaves us on the horns of a dilemma. Our principle hope of eliminating war lies in the direction that cultural evolution is taking, namely the development of men into "constitutional pacifists" such as Freud himself was, by the repression of their natural aggressive instincts. But this curb on the expression of aggression turns man's destructive instincts inward upon himself, thus increasing the incidence of direct and indirect suicide.[1] It seems that Freud offers us the alternative of

[1] In beautiful accord with the logic of his theory we find Freud on at least one occasion seriously considering suicide. In a letter to his fiancee Martha he says: "I have long since resolved on a decision (suicide), the thought of which is in no way painful, in the event of my losing you." (Ernest Jones, The Life and Works of Sigmund Freud [New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1953], I: 122).

destroying ourselves through external aggression, principally war, or through inward-directed aggression, including suicide. This dilemma is part of Freud's ambiguous feelings about civilization--as a scientist and worshipper of the god Logos he could not help but feel that civilization was good, but he realized that civilization demanded much repression of instincts by men and made them correspondingly discontented with civilization. He concludes Civilization and Its Discontents on this note of ambiguity:

> I have endeavoured to guard myself against the enthusiastic prejudice which holds that our civilization is the most precious thing that we possess or could acquire and that its path will necessarily lead to heights of unimagined perfection. I can at least listen without indignation to the critic who is of the opinion that when one surveys the aims of cultural endeavor and the means it employs, one is bound to come to the conclusion that the whole effort is not worth the trouble, and that the outcome of it can only be a state of affairs which the individual will be unable to tolerate.[1]

Freud's constant theme of the power and intractability of the id, with its lust for sex and blood, leads us to suspect that his lack of indignation at the views of the unnamed "critic" may have sprung from a basic sympathy with those views.

Increased incidence of suicide then seems in the logic of Freud's theory to be one of the prices we must pay for progress, for the advancement of civilization, with its repression of external aggression. Freud did not devote a paper exclusively to speculation on the causes of suicide,

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and Its Discontents (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1961), p. 91.

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but others have pieced together his theory of suicide from passages here and there in his works, principally in Mourning and Melancholia. He states that it is the tendency to suicide that makes melancholia so interesting and so dangerous.[1] But he finds it remarkable that anyone could consider suicide, and thus act contrary to the powerful self-love which is the very core of our being.

> As the primal condition from which instinct-life proceeds we have come to recognize a self-love of the ego which is so immense, in the fear that rises up at the menace of death we see liberated a volume of narcissistic libido which is so vast, that we cannot conceive how this ego can conceive at its own destruction.[2]

Here he adds a note that has been made into the essential element of the "Freudian theory" of suicide by some of his followers:

> It is true we have long known that no neurotic harbors thoughts of suicide which are not murderous impulses against others redirected upon himself. . . .[3]

However the helpfulness of this last insight is spoiled by the fact that in the Freudian view everyone, not merely would-be suicides, has harbored murderous impulses against others. This is part of the ambiguous feelings we have toward even--especially--our closest loved ones. Of this particular insight Robert Litman in his Sigmund Freud on Suicide remarks:

> Freud's dictum that suicide starts with a death wish against others, which is then redirected toward an

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, in A General Selection from the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1957), p. 133.

[2]Ibid., p. 133. [3]Ibid.

> identification within the self, has been overly accentuated among some psychotherapists, in my opinion, and has become a cliché.[1]

Perhaps in Freud's analysis of melancholy we can find enough elements to explain suicide without adverting to inverted murderous impulses. Granted, these may be present, but let us follow the sound principle of not multiplying entities without necessity, a principle variously referred to as parsimony, economy, Occam's razor, or, merely, simplicity. The principle problem to be overcome is that already stated by Freud: since self-love is the very core of our being, how can a man act against that self-love and kill himself? I believe Freud gives us the answer when in other writings he offers us further insights into this self-love of the ego which is "the primal condition from which all instinct-life proceeds." In The Ego and the Id he says:

> The fear of death in melancholia only admits of one explanation: that the ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego, instead of being loved. To the ego, therefore, living means the same as being loved--being loved by the super-ego. . . .[2]

The melancholic has an especial fear of death because he vividly recognizes his suicidal tendencies (the ego giving itself up) due to his failure to live up to his ideal self-image. When Freud says that the ego is hated and persecuted by the super-ego he means that the ego is not living up to

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[1]Robert E. Litman, "Sigmund Freud on Suicide," in Essays in Self-Destruction (New York: Science House, Inc., 1967), p. 340.

[2]Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 233.

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the ego-ideal. Precisely, the person has a self-esteem that is tormentingly low.

For the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego. Which is to say, for the individual living means having an actual self-image that corresponds to his ideal self-image. And this correspondence between actual self-image and ideal self-image (super-ego, in its ego-ideal aspect) is a good definition of self-esteem. Living means having a good self-esteem. This is the immense self-love of the ego, the vast narcissistic libido, the primal condition from which all instinct-life proceeds. But are we not making a mistake in equating the self-love of the ego with its desire for love from the super-ego? I believe the following considerations will show we are not. Self-love can be interpreted to mean desire for goods to be possessed by self, or it can be interpreted to mean the estimation that self already possesses much good. The latter is self-esteem, i.e., approval of the ego by the super-ego. If we interpret self-love in the former way, as the desire for goods to be possessed by self, the question is, what is the good Freud has singled out as that desired by the ego? He tells us: being loved by the super-ego, i.e., self-esteem. Self-esteem then emerges as the vast narcissistic libido, the primal condition from which all instinct-life proceeds. Freud could not afford to spell out thus explicitly the conclusion inherent in his thinking (his ego defenses would not even allow him to admit it to himself) because it would be pounced on in triumph by his now hated

enemy Adler (Mourning and Melancholia was published in 1917; the final break with Adler came in 1911) with the cry: "Aha! Now after all your vilification of me and my ideas you finally admit that I was right all along! For what is the drive for self-esteem but another aspect of the drive for superiority!"[1]

In another of his works Freud recognizes that this desire of the ego to be loved by the super-ego is even stronger than the pleasure principle, in that it can lead the individual to renounce the urges of the pleasure principle:

> While however, instinctual renunciation for external reasons is only painful, renunciation for internal reasons, in obedience to the demands of the Super-ego, has another economic effect. It brings besides the inevitable pain a gain in pleasure to the Ego--as it were, a substitutive satisfaction. The Ego feels uplifted; it is proud of the renunciation as of a valuable achievement. . . . When the Ego has made the sacrifice to the Super-ego of renouncing an instinctual satisfaction, it expects to be rewarded by being loved all the more. The consciousness of deserving this love is felt as pride.[2]

Thus, the ego is capable of pushing aside other instinctual gratifications in order to feel pride, self-esteem. And as an aside, not here touched by Freud, much of the pleasure that we human beings take in indulging in our "instinctual satisfactions" is a pride in having in the competence, boldness, free-spiritedness to let nothing stand

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[1]Whether self-esteem is an aspect of the desire for superiority, or whether the desire for superiority is an aspect of self-esteem, we will consider in another section.

[2]Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), pp. 149-50.

in the way of the satisfaction of our desires. No value judgment, pro or con, is intended in this statement.

We find further mention of this drive for self-esteem (correspondence between ego and ego-ideal, i.e., super-ego) in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego:

> There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal. And the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego and the ego-ideal.[1]

How does all this relate to melancholic suicide? The characteristic of the melancholic is low self-esteem:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, abrogation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings. . . .[2]
>
> Now the melancholic displays something else which is lacking in grief--an extraordinary fall in his self-esteem, an impoverishment of his ego on a grand scale. In grief the world becomes poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself [which becomes poor and empty]. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless. . . .[3]
>
> He has lost his self-respect and must have some good reason for having done so.[4]

If for the ego living means being loved by the super-ego, then the ego will have no desire to live if it sees no hope for love from the super-ego. Which is to say, the individual will have no further desire to live if his self-esteem is crushed and he sees no hope of restoring it. This,

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[1]Freud, Group Psychology, p. 200.

[2]Freud, Mourning and Melancholia, p. 125.

[3]Ibid., p. 127. [4]Ibid., p. 129.

in my opinion, is the essential element in Freud's explanation of suicide in the melancholic.

The validity of the other elements in Freud's analysis of melancholia--that the loss of self-esteem is due primarily to guilt feelings concerning death wishes toward a loved one with whom the melancholic has identified himself and has lost--does not seem essential to the basic thesis that lack of love from the super-ego causes the ego to give up its desire to live. Indeed, near the end of Mourning and Melancholia Freud raises the question (but does not answer it) whether the concept of loss of a loved one is really necessary to produce melancholia.

> These questions link up with the further one, whether a loss in the ego apart from any object (a purely narcissistic wound to the ego) would suffice to produce the clinical picture of melancholia and whether an impoverishment of ego-libido directly due to toxins could not result in certain forms of the disease.[1]

The logical cohesion of his thought is not spoiled if we put aside the element of murderous wishes toward a lost loved one and summarize his theory of suicide: the ego gives up its will to live when it perceives that it is not loved by the super-ego.

Adler on Suicide

In the light of Adler's basic premise that "striving for superiority" is the motivation behind all our behavior we might expect to find this as his proposed key to understanding suicide. And here we are faced with a paradox:

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[1]Ibid., p. 134.

superiority is based upon possession of good, and how can a person hope to increase his superiority by throwing away the good, life itself, which is the foundation for the possession of other goods? In his writings on suicide Adler does not bring up this problem, but perhaps we can offer an answer within the framework of Adler's system. First, we suggest that seeking superiority is only one side of the coin; the obverse and equally important side of the coin is "striving to avoid feelings of inferiority." Of course Adler has recognized this; he tells us that all human beings suffer from feelings of inferiority, which give birth to the striving for superiority.

> We pointed out long ago that to be human means to feel inferior.[1]
>
> Who can seriously doubt that the human individual treated by nature in such a stepmother fashion has been provided with the blessing of a strong feeling of inferiority that urges him towards a plus situation, towards security and conquest?[2]

In this framework the drive to escape feelings of inferiority is even more basic than the striving for superiority. And this provides us with our suggested answer to the above paradox. The suicidal individual is suffering from extremely painful feelings of inferiority, sees no hope for alleviating those pains by any other alternative, and chooses what seems to be the only sure way of ending the excruciating pain of a crushed self-esteem--suicide.

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[1] Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 115.

[2] Ibid., p. 117.

This reasoning seems in logical accord with Adler's premises, but in solving one paradox we have created another. This new paradox is occasioned by Adler's observation that suicidal individuals have what seems to be excessive self-esteem, rather than too little. He describes them:

> Suicidal persons have always been problem children, spoiled at least by one side of the family, very complacent, and oversensitive . . . with this firm belief in their high value for others. . . . Rather, with an exaggerated consciousness of his own worth, he expects with great tension results which are always favorable for him.[1]

Can we say that in the last sentence above Adler has suggested the answer to the paradox? When he says that the suicidal person expects with great tension results which are always favorable to him, we get the picture of an individual who is not able to tolerate reversals. His life as a spoiled child has given him too high an opinion of his own worth, thus making him especially likely to experience rude shocks in later life when he cannot escape the fact that others do not share his high evaluation of himself. Also, his life as a spoiled child has to some degree shielded him from self-esteem reversals and thus has not enabled him to build up a tolerance for them. Thus, when he does undergo a humiliation the pain is too much for him to bear. Adler offers confirmation of this in his description of the suicidal type:

> Among the early childhood expressions of the suicide one also finds the deepest grieving often over

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[1]Alfred Adler, "Suicide," Journal of Individual Psychology 14 (May 1958): 57-61.

> negligible matters, strong wishes to become sick or to die when a humiliation is experienced, tantrums with willful self-injury, and an attitude toward others as if it were their duty to fulfill his every wish.[1]

This suggests that the determining element may be degree of tolerance to self-esteem loss rather than merely low self-esteem. The difference would be that person A may have a high self-esteem and suffer some painful humiliation that drives him to suicide, even though his thus-reduced self-esteem is still greater than that of person B, who has a greater tolerance for self-esteem reversals and thus does not resort to suicide. However, whether the determining element is lack of tolerance for loss or is objectively low self-esteem, both cases would be comprehended by the one formula "the essential element in suicide is a condition of lowered self-esteem too painful for the individual to bear." This, of course, bearing in mind our other two conditions, namely, that the individual sees no hope for the future, and feels that suicide will mean a surcease rather than an increase of his suffering.

Now let us consider some of the immediate motivations Adler finds among suicides to see if they fit our thesis. One of these motivations is the desire for attention.

> In cases of suicide we can make similar observations. After long training[2] such individuals forego any interest in life and are filled with the thought of attracting

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[1] Ibid., p. 60.

[2] What he means in this context by "long training" is not clear, but in the light of his other comments we assume he means "training in being a spoiled-child type of person."

> general attention through their suicide and of achieving thus, like a murderer, a heightened feeling of superiority. ("I have done what not everyone could do. Formerly nobody took any notice of me; but now . . .") To be master over life and death brings them close to God, as it does the murderer who disposes of the lives of others.[1]

Presumably the person described above, seeking an increased sense of self-esteem through being the center of attention and through exercising the ultimate power over life, would not resort to this irreversible strategem unless his present self-esteem were painfully low. This however does add a new element--but not one that changes the basic picture--to our thesis: the suicide is not merely an attempt to avoid the pain of a wounded self-esteem, but may also be an attempt to achieve an increase in self-esteem, however ephemeral.

Adler also mentions the motivation to hurt others.

> Reduced to its simplest form, the life style of the potential suicide is characterized by the fact that he hurts others by dreaming himself into injuries or by administering them to himself. One will seldom go wrong in determining against whom the attack is aimed when one has found who is actually affected most by it.[2]

The suicide's desire to hurt others is an attempt at revenge for the hurts they have caused him. Revenge, as we have discussed previously, is a form of one-up-manship in the self-esteem game.

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[1]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 151.

[2]Adler, "Suicide," p. 61.

What is the meaning of Adler's dictum that the individual's lack of social interest is the necessary condition for suicide?

> . . . suicide is a solution only for one who in the face of an urgent problem has arrived at the end of his limited social interest.[1]

> All failures--neurotics, psychotics, criminals, drunkards, problem children, suicides, perverts, and prostitutes--are failures because they are lacking in social interest.[2]

Adler explains that everyone strives for significance in his life, and the person with social interest, by definition, realizes that his significance must consist in contributing to the welfare of others. Therefore such a person would not resort to the sterile alternative of suicide.

"Normal" suicide

In our citations thus far Adler has been referring to suicides who are "psychologically ill," and who constitute the majority of suicides. However he points out that relatively normal people may also commit suicide.

> Even so, there are certain situations from which the normal person regards suicide as the only way out. These are situations which are too distressing and unalterable, such as torment without any prospect for relief, inhumanly cruel attacks, fear of discovery of disgraceful or criminal actions, suffering of incurable and extremely painful diseases, etc. Surprisingly enough, the number of suicides actually committed for such reasons is not great.[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 59.

[2]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 156.

[3]Adler, "Suicide," p. 57.

These conditions for "normal" suicide also seem reduceable to the desire to flee psychological pain due to lowered self-esteem or to flee incurable and unbearable physical pain, which incidentally is also attended by a loss in self-esteem ("I'm no use any more, just a burden to my family"). The underlying self-esteem loss is even more evident when Adler spells out the more frequent of the causes of "normal" suicide:

> Among the so-called causes for suicide, disregarding the cases of the psychologically ill, loss of money and unpayable debts take the first place. This gives us much to think about. Disappointed and unhappy love follow in frequency. Further frequent causes are permanent unemployment for which the individual may, or may not be responsible, and justified or unjustified reproaches.[1]

Finally, Adler briefly mentions suicide "epidemics" as a cause. In the literature we find examples of this. Goethe's book The Sorrows of Young Werther, in which the hero commits suicide because of unrequited love, touched off such a wave of sympathetic suicides that the book was banned in Prussia.

> Before the craze for Werther, suicide for reasons more high-minded than money was thought to be a lapse of taste; now it was more than exonerated, it was fashionable.[2]

When Lord Castlereagh leaped into the crater at Vesuvius, several of his companions followed suit.[3] Statistics

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[1]Ibid., p. 58.

[2]Alvarez, Savage God, p. 200.

[3]Durkheim, Suicide, p. 131.

show that after the suicide of a prominent person (e.g., Marilyn Monroe), or of an ordinary person in an especially dramatic manner, the suicide rate in the locality rises significantly for the next few weeks.

> There are sharp local and temporary increases in the suicide rate that can be traced to specific causes. For example, the publication of Goethe's Sorrows of Young Werther is said to have caused a wave of youthful suicides. More striking still is the outbreak of suicides on the Japanese volcano-island of Mihara-Yama. A girl of nineteen, Kiyoko Matsumoto, took a boat to this small island, about a two-hour trip from Tokyo, climbed the side of the mountain to the crater's edge, and threw herself in. This occurred in February, 1933. The newspapers played it up. In the remaining ten months of 1933, 143 people jumped into the crater.[1]

This seems to support the contention that at least a partial motive in some cases of suicide is the desire to attract attention. The suicide gets self-esteem gratification from his prevision of the resultant fame and notoriety. He sees suicide as the "in" thing for the "out" group to do. A satirist, tongue in cheek but with considerable insight, has described the mood:

> "A suicide establishes a man. Alive one is nothing; dead one becomes a hero. . . . All suicides are successful; the papers take them up; people feel for them. I must decidedly make my preparations."[2]

In conclusion, we suggest that the concept of self-esteem is the key to understanding both Adler's general comments on suicide and also the immediate motivations for

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[1]Robert J. Havighurst, "Suicide and Education," in On the Nature of Suicide, ed. Edwin S. Shneidman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., 1969), p. 57.

[2]Alvarez, Savage God, p. 204.

suicide mentioned by him. His views might be summarized: A person commits suicide to escape from feelings of inferiority too painful to bear, and additionally in some cases, to attain a sense of superiority from the suffering he inflicts upon others, from exercising a definitive power over life, and/or from the attention he will attract.

In addition, Adler has provided us with the insight that the critical factor in a suicidal decision may be the individual's lack of tolerance for a self-esteem reversal, rather than merely a very low level of self-esteem.

Durkheim on Suicide

> There are those, moreover, who look upon Le Suicide as still an outstanding, if not the outstanding, work in what is called the study of social causation. And in what has come to be known as the sociology of knowledge, Durkheim's attempts to relate systems of thought to states of the collective conscience involved in the currents of egoism, altruism, and anomy, in this volume, have been of no little influence.[1]

Durkheim's study of suicide has been much criticized, principally on the grounds that his statistics are primitive by modern standards, and the concepts he uses are not defined with sufficient precision, but his work still remains a classic that is spoken of with reverence in sociology classes. Evidence for the enduring value of his work is the fact that still, almost 80 years after the appearance of his book, articles are appearing in journals analyzing or criticizing his theories. We have chosen to consider his

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[1]Durkheim, Suicide, p. 11, Editor's Preface.

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ideas because of the minuteness of his examination of the problem of suicide, and the value of his psychological insights. This last is the more remarkable, in that Durkheim was a sociologist.

Durkheim mentions four types of suicide, each with its own social causes and psychological characteristics--egoistic, anomic, altruistic and fatalistic suicide. The diagram and accompanying explanation on the next page will help the reader to get an overall view of Durkheim's theory. Hopefully, the picture will be increasingly clarified as we proceed.

Fatalistic suicide

Fatalistic suicide is mentioned by Durkheim only in a footnote, and with the comment that it is so unimportant (rare in modern times) that it seems useless to dwell upon it. It is the suicide resulting from excessive social regulation, with the result that the person's "future is pitilessly blocked and passions violently choked by oppressive discipline."[1] In this class of suicides are slaves, very young husbands, and childless married women. We will observe Durkheim's injunction that it seems useless to dwell upon this type.

Altruistic suicide

Altruistic suicide is a phenomenon found in societies where social integration is very strong, and "individuation"

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[1]Ibid., p. 276.

DURKHEIM'S THEORY OF SUICIDE[1]

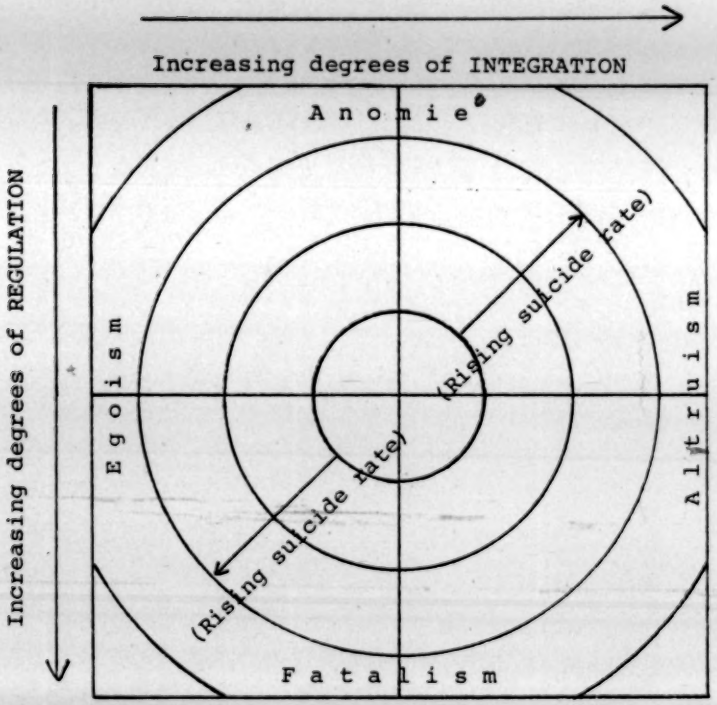

Figure 2. Suicide Rate under Varying Social Conditions

Explanation of Diagram

The determining causes of suicide are social integration and social regulation. Social integration is the number and closeness of ties that the individual has with other members of society. In the diagram above, social

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[1]Diagram taken from "Durkheim's One Cause of Suicide," by Barclay D. Johnson, in American Sociological Review 30 (1965): 875-86. Johnson's conclusion: fatalistic and altruistic suicide do not belong in the scheme, and integration and regulation are the same. Therefore: suicide rate is inversely proportional to the degree of integration/regulation. Johnson's conclusion seems to have merit, but is not relevant for our present considerations.

integration increases from left to right. Too little social integration, on the left, results in a high rate of egoistic suicides. Excessive social integration, on the right, results in a high rate of altruistic suicides. The lowest suicide rate occurs in societies with a moderate degree of social integration.

Social regulation is the degree of control that society exerts upon the individual's desires and life style. In the diagram above, social regulation increases from top to bottom. A low degree of social regulation, at the top, results in a high rate of anomic suicides. Excessive social regulation, at the bottom, causes a high rate of fatalistic suicides. Thus the society with a moderate degree of social integration and of social regulation, the center of the diagram, would have the lowest suicide rate.

All of this should be qualified by Durkheim's statements that fatalistic suicides are so rare today as not to be worth considering, and that altruistic suicides are very rare in contemporary Western society.

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(Durkheim shies away from calling it individualism, but it seems to amount to the same thing) is correspondingly weak.[1] He considers this type of suicide to have been endemic among primitive peoples and cites traditions among several ancient tribes to the effect that a hellish after-life awaits those who die a natural death, but a glorious immortality is in store for those who die in battle or by suicide. Also cited are customs prescribing death for all the king's attendants upon the death of the king. Suttee is also mentioned. The common denominator Durkheim finds here is self-inflicted death out of a sense of duty. He comments that if such a person refuses to commit suicide he loses public respect.[2] This accords well with our self-esteem theory. A large part of our self-esteem derives from the respect that others accord us, and this is especially true in the situation Durkheim is describing here, where the individual is strongly integrated into society. The above cases are described by Durkheim as obligatory altruistic suicide.

Optional altruistic suicide is not enjoined by social rules but is regarded with admiration. Here Durkheim mentions harakiri, and the custom of suicide for the "slightest reason," "offense," "quarrel," or "disappointment" among ancient Germans and Gauls, American Indians, Polynesians, Japanese and other Orientals.[3] As motivation Durkheim

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[1]Ibid., p. 217. [2]Ibid., p. 219. [3]Ibid., p. 222.

offers vainglory, public acclaim, desire to escape insult or win esteem. All of these fit neatly into our self-esteem theory.

> Since here not clinging to life is a virtue, even of the highest rank, the man who renounces life on least provocation of circumstances or through simple vainglory is praiseworthy. A social prestige thus attaches to suicide, which receives encouragement from this fact, and the refusal of this reward has effects similar to actual punishment, although to a lesser degree. What is done in one case to escape the stigma of insult is done in the other to win esteem.[1]

A third type is acute altruistic suicide. Here the individual "kills himself purely for the joy of sacrifice, because, even with no particular reason, renunciation in itself is considered praiseworthy."[2] Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, with their doctrine that egoism is the ultimate evil, lend themselves to the mystique that the definitive denial of egoism is suicide, although occasionally one does find teachings in these religions which frown upon suicide. Of this type of suicide Durkheim mentions the throngs that in a religious frenzy cast themselves under the crushing wheels of the Juggernaut, or cast themselves into volcanoes in honor of their gods, or board ships which are then sunk while the votaries sing the praises of their idols. Of such suicides Durkheim says that their memory is held in great reverence. This suggests something we have seen before and will advert to later, namely the curious gratification that some suicides get from the pre-vision of the publicity and sympathy accruing to them after their death. Ante-mortem

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[1]Ibid., p. 222. [2]Ibid., p. 223.

self-esteem from post-mortem acclaim seems to hold considerable allure. Probably we all share in this eagerness to be well-thought-of after we depart this scene.

Also motivating these acute altruistic suicides is the desire to "strip himself of his personal being in order to be engulfed in something which he regards as his true essence."[1] The mainstreams of philosophic Hinduism and Buddhism, and, to a lesser extent, popular Hinduism and Buddhism, are monistic--there is only one reality, the infinite That. Individual existence is an illusion. The only true excellence consists in losing one's individuality and merging with the infinite one reality. The acute altruistic suicide sees himself as acquiring this one true excellence, not for his individual self, which is an illusion, but by unity with the One. Self-esteem we have defined as awareness of excellence possessed, and the acute altruistic suicide is, he believes, acquiring the supreme and only excellence by being made one with it. Although the individual self is, at least in "pure" Hinduism, thought to be only an illusion, the objection that therefore the individual cannot be seeking possession of excellence for self is merely an academic objection; the concrete motivation is "ah, union with excellence" which is the essence of self-esteem. Durkheim says: "The name he gives it [the great That, Brahman, etc.] is unimportant; he feels that he exists in it and in it alone, and strives so violently to blend

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[1]Ibid., p. 225.

himself with it in order to have being."[1] "It even implies enthusiasm and the spur of a faith eagerly seeking satisfaction."

Military suicide. Durkheim considers suicide among personnel in modern armed forces to be another example of altruistic suicide. Such suicide is especially high among officers and non-commissioned officers, and among volunteers rather than conscripts. This Durkheim attributes to the stronger military spirit among the former. The military man has an exceedingly high degree of integration into the military society; his training develops a habit of obedience and submission, and thus "a soldier's principle of action is external to himself; which is the quality of the state of altruism."[2] Durkheim assigns the following concrete motivations to military suicides:

> Influenced by this predisposition, the soldier kills himself at the least disappointment, for the most futile reasons, for a refusal of leave, a reprimand, an unjust punishment, a delay in promotion, a question of honor, a flush of momentary jealousy or even simply because other suicides have occurred before his eyes or to his knowledge.[3]

All of these causes involve a loss of self-esteem, with the exception of the last, which is not a cause but a condition which encourages other causes to find issue in suicide. Of course this is not an attack upon Durkheim's thesis that a very high degree of integration into society encourages suicide. Our point is that whether the suicide

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[1]Ibid., p. 225. [2]Ibid., p. 234. [3]Ibid., p. 238.

rate is high or low, the immediate cause is a self-esteem problem.

Egoistic suicide

Egoistic suicide is the opposite of altruistic suicide in Durkheim's schema. Whereas the latter is occasioned by "excessive" integration into society, the former is occasioned by insufficient integration into society. The characteristics of the egoistic suicide: a state of general depression,[1] and detached from society.[2] Egoistic suicides are of two types, Stoic and Epicurean. The Epicurean suicide lives only to satisfy his physical desires, "like a child or an animal."[3] If he reaches an impasse, faced with the prospect of not being able to continue gratification of his appetites on the level he considers adequate, he is prepared to "terminate a thenceforth meaningless existence."[4] "Such especially is the case of those voluptuaries who, when the fatal moment comes when they can no longer continue their easy existence, kill themselves with ironic tranquillity and a matter-of-course mood."[5] In so doing they are wittingly or unwittingly following the advice of Epicurus, who counseled his followers to live as long as they were deriving pleasure from life.

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[1]Ibid., p. 283. [2]Ibid., p. 288.

[3]Ibid., p. 282. [4]Ibid.

[5]Ibid.

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"Less commonplace" is the egoistic suicide of the Stoic type. He is an introvert, unwilling to emerge from himself, self-preoccupied, detached from the rest of the universe and self-enamoured to the point of worship.[1] His whole activity is given to inner dreamings and rumination which become increasingly devoid of external content until "its only remaining object of thought is its inner nothingness and the resulting melancholy."[2] But he takes a "morbid joy" in his melancholy, which has a "langourous charm" for him.

> However, one cannot long remain so absorbed in contemplation of emptiness without being increasingly attracted to it. In vain one bestows on it the name of infinity; this does not change its nature. When one feels such pleasure in non-existence, one's inclination can be completely satisfied only by completely ceasing to exist.[3]

As the social cause of this type of suicide Durkheim assigns a lack of integration into society. Actually he describes it as society's lack of integration, but it amounts to the same thing.

> This loathness to act, this melancholy detachment, springs from the over-individuation by which we have defined this type of suicide. If the individual isolates himself, it is because the ties uniting him with others are slackened or broken, because society is not sufficiently integrated at the points where he is in contact with it.[4]

Analysis of motivation of egoistic suicide by self-esteem theory

The suicide of the Epicurean type might seem easily explainable by sense pleasure motivation. Having lived for

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[1]Ibid., p. 279. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 280. [4]Ibid., p. 281.

voluptuous gratification, the individual almost inevitably decides to end his existence when he sees his pleasures coming to an end, whether through ill-health, jaded appetite, poverty, etc. But is there another factor, perhaps even more influential, at work? That is, the individual has invested his self-esteem in his ability to provide sense delights for himself. Certainly the gourmet takes pride in his talents, as does the Don Juan. One can see the voluptuary (to use Durkheim's expression) radiating self-congratulation as he partakes of his pleasures, or even as he anticipates them or reminisces about them. When he is cut off from his pleasures by circumstances, his ego structure which was built upon those pleasures collapses. His self-esteem base is destroyed. Adler mentions this type of person:

> [Apparent dominance of pleasure or self-preservation] corresponds to two types of persons, among other types. One is least able to forego the contribution of pleasure to his self-esteem, whereas the other demands primarily the thought of life and of immortality.[1]

The introverted, melancholic "Stoic" type of suicide has withdrawn from society because he has found social contacts to be painful. His self-esteem has been repeatedly wounded by rejections, wall-flower isolation, and his awkward performance in social situations. He consoles himself by deriving his self-esteem from solitary pursuits, and in less healthy cases, from fantasies of personal triumphs--conquering enemies, receiving public acclaim, saving fair maidens,

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[1]Adler, Individual Psychology, p. 122.

seducing fair maidens, etc. His is a Walter Mitty existence. But whence the "morbid joy" and "languourous charm" in his melancholy that Durkheim speaks of? His melancholy is an "I'm all alone and nobody loves me" feeling. A sadness and yet there are elements in it conducive to a certain sweetness for the possessor. First, there is a peace of resignation: I don't have to put forth any effort, because what's the use? Here in my isolation I am safe from the slings and arrows of social humiliation. Isolation can be an armor for the self-esteem, just as it can be a hair-shirt for the self-esteem if the isolated one allows himself to think of it as evidence of inferiority on his part. Instead, making a virtue of a necessity, the isolated one can consider his situation a continuing proof that he is of a finer nature than those coarse oafs who shout and laugh and go to parties all the time. But a self-esteem built upon day dreams and the sweet elements in melancholy is a fragile thing. When moments of truth arrive and it becomes painfully evident that none of his dreams of glory are ever going to materialize, where can the individual turn for self-esteem? His house has been built upon a foundation of sand; the wind and the rain wash away the foundation and his house collapses.

Anomic suicide

The significant element in Durkheim's concept of egoistic and altruistic suicide was social integration; egoistic suicide results from too little social integration

and altruistic suicide from a very high degree of social integration. With anomic suicide Durkheim introduces another determining factor--regulation of desires. The individual finds himself in a social situation which does not sufficiently limit his desires and they run wild.

> Appetites, not being controlled by a public opinion become disoriented, no longer recognize the limits proper to them. . . . The state of de-regulation or anomy is thus further heightened by passions being less disciplined, precisely when they need more disciplining.[1]

Durkheim characterizes this state as "over-weening ambition," "agitation without appeasement," "race for an unattainable goal." Nothing gives satisfaction because with each achievement of desire there is always something bigger and better beckoning and making the individual dissatisfied with his present accomplishments, possessions or pleasures.

Durkheim gives additional insight into this condition by explaining why there is more suicide among the wealthy than among the poor.

> Poverty protects against suicide because it is a restraint in itself. . . . Wealth, on the other hand, by the power it bestows, deceives us into believing that we depend on ourselves only. Reducing the resistance we encounter from objects, it suggests the possibility of unlimited success against them. The less limited one feels, the more intolerable all limitation appears. Not without reason, therefore, have so many religions dwelt upon the advantages and moral value of poverty. It is actually the best school for teaching self-restraint.[2]

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[1] Durkheim, Suicide, p. 253.

[2] Ibid., p. 254.

A key factor here is his comment that the less limitation one has experienced, the more intolerable any limitation becomes. He develops this further:

> In societies where a man is subjected to a healthy discipline, he submits more readily to the blows of chance. The necessary effort for sustaining a little more discomfort costs him relatively little, since he is used to discomfort and constraint. But when every constraint is hateful in itself, how can closer constraint not seem intolerable? There is no tendency to resignation in the feverish impatience of men's lives. When there is no other aim but to outstrip constantly the point arrived at, how painful it is to be thrown back![1]

We will consider the significance of this more at length when we seek to discover the relevance of the self-esteem theory to anomic suicide.

Some of Durkheim's descriptions of the anomic condition have a very contemporary ring: Religion has lost its influence; economic materialism is triumphant; appetites thus excited (the art of exciting appetites has mega-exploded since D's day) have become freed of any limiting authority; restraint seems a sort of sacrilege; greed is aroused which nothing can calm; a thirst arises for novelties, unfamiliar pleasures, nameless sensations, all of which lose their savor once known; henceforth one has no strength to endure the least reverse.[2]

Lack of external regulation by society occasions anomy. "When one is no longer checked, one becomes unable to check one's self."[3] But external regulation is not the

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[1]Ibid., p. 256. [2]Ibid., pp. 255-6.

[3]Ibid., p. 271.

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ultimate determining factor. Necessary is internal regulation. Only regulation by the individual's conscience can effectively prevent runaway desires.

> What actually matters in fact is not only that the regulation should exist, but that it should be accepted by the conscience. Otherwise, since this regulation no longer has moral authority and continues only through the force of inertia, it can no longer play any useful role. It chafes without accomplishing much.[1]

Durkheim contrasts the emotional mood of anomic suicide with that of egoistic suicide. In the latter there is no mood of anger or violence, merely melancholy or a matter-of-fact determination to end it all. But the anomic suicide is characterized by a mood of anger, irritation, or disgust. Since desires are limitless, disappointment and disillusionment are inevitable. In "regressive" anomy the individual is cast down from his accustomed status, and rages against the cause. If he sees the cause as himself, suicide is likely. In "progressive" anomy the individual realizes he will not achieve his too-high goal--perhaps he is disappointed in love, or his popularity is waning, or he has run into an invincible obstacle in his "reaching for the stars."[2] Peevish disgust ensues, perhaps to a fatal degree. Durkheim quotes Seneca as describing the mood of the anomic suicide:

> "The evil which assails us," he writes," is not in the localities we inhabit but in ourselves. We lack strength to endure the least task, being incapable of suffering pain, powerless to enjoy pleasure, impatient with everything. How many invoke death when, after having tried

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[1]Ibid., p. 272. [2]Ibid., p. 285.

> every sort of change, they find themselves reverting to the same sensations, unable to discover any new experience."[1]

Consideration of anomic suicide in the light of the self-esteem theory

The key feature of Durkheim's anomy is runaway desires. Contemporary sociologists concur in characterizing anomy (anomie is the preferred spelling now) as "normlessness." This term is a close enough approximation of D's concept if we bear some qualifications in mind. Inasmuch as a norm is a guiding and controlling factor, absence of truly introjected norms is a contributing factor to uncontrolled desires. However, even though the individual has no interior norms he would probably not be in a condition of anomy if he were poverty-stricken. His poverty would be an externally controlling factor that would limit his desires. Further, there are certain norms which encourage anomy--for example, "hitch your wagon to a star," "the sky is the limit," "go for broke," and "grab all the gusto you can get."

Whether the uncontrolled desires are sensate or "psychological" (ambition, greed, desire for acceptance, status, prestige, etc.), or both does not matter for our consideration; the dynamics of the situation is the same for both. The key elements that trigger suicide in this case are frustration and lack of tolerance for frustration. The individual's desires would not have progressed to the

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[1]Ibid., p. 286.

uncontrolled state without considerable initial success in gratification. As Augustine says, "the satisfaction of desire opens wide the jaws of desire." And this initial success has not acclimatized the individual to frustration and thus he has no tolerance for frustration, as Durkheim remarks on several occasions. But he is on a collision course with disaster, because his over-weening desires make ultimate frustration inevitable.

Self-esteem is the awareness of excellence possessed, or likely to be possessed, and the anomic person has oriented his self-esteem toward continual and uncontrolled acquisition of new and better excellences (whether it be a better "lay," more money, more prestige, etc.). Thus develops the intolerance for frustration, because formerly achieved excellences have little consoling value for his self-esteem, so oriented is it toward future acquisitions. His is the attitude of Chateaubriand's René, cited by Durkheim as typical of the anomic mentality: "everything once experienced has no value for me."[1] When inevitable frustration comes, the anomic person does not console himself with "counting his past blessings" as another person might. Without this ego backlog to fall back on, the anomic cannot stand frustration. As Durkheim puts it:

> But the man who has always pinned all his hopes on the future and lived with eyes fixed upon it, has nothing in the past as a comfort against the present's afflictions, for the past was nothing to him but a series of

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[1] Ibid., p. 287.

> hastily experienced stages. What blinded him to himself was his expectation always to find further on the happiness he had so far missed. Now he is stopped in his tracks; from now on nothing remains behind or ahead of him to fix his gaze upon.[1]

He has no basis for self-esteem, in the past or the future. What remains but to put an end to an existence not only meaningless but bitter.

The same conclusions are reached if we look at anomy from the point of view of Durkheim's "regressive" and "progressive" anomy. In regressive anomy a man has been "abruptly cast down below his accustomed status." What a blow to self-esteem! He is angry against the cause of his fall. We have seen in our previous analysis of anger that it is a reaction resulting from injured self-esteem. If the anomic person perceives the cause of his fall to be himself, "there will be only suicide"; if the perceived cause is another, "suicide may be preceded by homicide or by some other violent outburst."[2]

In progressive anomy the individual is "impelled constantly to surpass himself, but without rule or moderation." Thus, his self-esteem is invested immoderately in future longed-for goals. When he fails to reach these ever-receding mirages his self-esteem basis is destroyed, and he "impatiently renounces an existence thenceforth too restrictive for him."[3]

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[1]Ibid., p. 256. [2]Ibid., p. 285.

[3]Ibid., p. 286.

Conclusion on Durkheim

The picture of suicide presented by Durkheim is one we have seen before: the individual kills himself when the pleasure/pain balance so dictates.[1] Pleasure in this case is the acquisition, or prospect of acquisition, of excellence. Pain is the awareness of loss of excellence or of the cessation of future increments of excellence. The self-esteem balance may indicate a large accrual of self-esteem if the individual takes his own life--this is the case with altruistic suicide and the resulting public image of hero, sometimes combined with the confidence of post-mortem union with the One True Excellence. The military suicide, although Durkheim classifies it as an altruistic suicide, does not fit the pattern of the other three types of altruistic suicide. Rather, this is an attempt to flee from the pain of self-esteem loss, loss occasioned by a "delay in promotion," "a reprimand," "a question of honor," etc.

Egoistic and anomic suicides are similarly attempts to flee from pain, the pain of realization that one has come to the end of the self-esteem road. The Epicurean egoist, when no longer able to provide, or enjoy, the pleasures upon which his ego structure has been built, terminates his existence matter-of-factly. The Stoic egoist has built his

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[1]This statement sounds deterministic, but we are making no implications about the existence or non-existence of free will. Even free will acts according to motivation and has its causes.

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concept of self-worth upon day-dreams in which he is the hero. When the realization that he is living an illusion is forced upon him, his self-esteem structure collapses, and he ends his life as he has lived it, with melancholy.

The anomic suicide is one of anger. Anger at himself as the cause of his being "cast down below his accustomed status." Or anger at himself for failing to achieve the over-weening ambitions that have led him on a fevered chase. Unregulated desires for ever-new excellences have led him to scorn past excellences. Thus his self-esteem base is ever invested in future acquisitions. When he comes to an impasse, with the possibility of future acquisitions cut off, he is self-esteem bankrupt.

The self-esteem economy of the anomic type is similar to the food economy of the shrew, that voracious little animal that feverishly and constantly dashes about searching for edibles, eating twice (three times?) its own weight every day, and if its food supply is cut off for one day, it dies. (At the opposite end of the self-esteem spectrum from the anomic would be the satisfied bovine type, who can munch contentedly on the self-esteem cud of membership in the DAR, scrapbooks of past achievements, and re-runs of home movies of last summer's vacation.)

Our usual two additional conditions for suicide apply in the case of the egoistic and anomic types, namely that the individual sees no hope for a self-esteem recoup in this life, and that he is <u>not</u> convinced that

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self-destruction will put him in an even worse condition in the next life. Or should we qualify that: readily conceivable is the case of the person who is so distraught by his present disaster that his only thought is to put an end to his present pain, with no thought of the future, either in this life or the next.

One additional comment: Durkheim's analysis of anomic suicide emphasizes something that we have seen before, namely that the determining factor in a suicide may be the individual's lack of tolerance for a self-esteem reversal, irrespective of the absolute level of the individual's self-esteem or the magnitude of the loss.

Explanation of Some Individual Cases of Suicide by the Self-Esteem Theory

A good theory, of course, must be able to explain the phenomena within its scope. As test cases for the self-esteem theory we have chosen the examples of suicide mentioned in the Bible. These have the advantage of posing an additional challenge in that they are far-removed from us in time and in cultural outlook. They do not offer a wealth of case history detail, but it will be an added convincing feature if the facts which their contemporaries saw as significant enough to mention are relevant to the self-esteem question.

Whether or not the Bible is an accurate historical record does not seem to be relevant in our present approach. Those who reject the historical validity of the Bible probably

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concede that it does represent the cultural attitudes of its time. That is, the attitudes and behavior of characters in the Bible are patterned upon actual behavior of persons in the writers' milieu. Even in fiction we demand a plausibly accurate portrayal of human motivation.

Celebrated in pictorial art and in drama is the suicide of Samson. Samson, blinded and chained by the Philistines, placed his hands upon the supporting pillars of the Philistine temple, and asking God to restore his former strength, pulled down the pillars. "So the dead whom he slew at his death were more than those whom he had slain during his life."[1]

What was Samson's motive? "That I may be revenged upon the Philistines."[2] And what is revenge? It is inflicting loss upon another in return for the loss he has inflicted upon you. The original injury may be a loss of reputation, of honor, of material goods, etc. Self-esteem is awareness of good possessed by self, and when another deprives you of some good, he injures your self-esteem to that extent. But an important feature in arousing the desire for revenge is the extent of willfulness and malice in the offender's action. If the injury was accidental and the offender offers a sincere apology, the injured party can be mollified. But a deliberate offense arouses the fury of the

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[1]Judges 16:30 (RSV). [RSV = Revised Standard Version.]

[2]Judges 16:28.

injured party. His loss is objectively no greater perhaps, but he recognizes that the offender is asserting his superiority and showing contempt for the feelings and welfare of the injured party, and thus contempt for the person himself. The feelings of the latter now can only be mollified by asserting his superiority over the offender by inflicting upon him a proportionate loss. Actually proportionate is not the word--ordinarily revenge demands a disproportionate payment. We don't really want to "get even" in the self-esteem balance, we want to get "one up." Revenge demands humiliation of the other, that is, a sharp injury to his self-esteem. Indeed, such is our fury at the lese majeste of injury to our self-esteem that we demand the ultimate payment, death of the offender, unless some prohibiting consideration (fear of punishment, conscience, etc.) intervenes. Samson demanded hundreds of deaths in payment for the humiliation his enemies had inflicted upon him--loss of his eyes, compounded by captivity and contumely. Freud recognizes the ultimate penalty that offended self-esteem demands:

> The little girl had been troublesome at meal-time and noticed that one of the maids at the pension where they were staying was looking at her askance. "I wish Josefine was dead," was the child's comment to her father. "Why dead?" enquired her father soothingly; "wouldn't it do if she went away?" "No," replied the child; "then she'd come back again." The unbounded self-love (the narcissism) of children regards any interference as an act of lese majeste; and their feelings demand (like the Draconian code) that any such crime shall

> receive the one form of punishment which admits of no degrees.[1]

Freud attributes this extreme narcissism to children; this is another way of saying that such is human nature. The adult still has the same urges but has more shame of admitting them even to himself, and is more aware of the disastrous consequences to himself of implementing his desires. Also, it must be admitted, some adults have attained transcendence over such desires by the breadth and depth of their acquired identification with other human beings.

Another case of suicide we find in the Bible is that of Saul. He had lost a crucial battle with the Philistines, his three sons had been killed, and he was grievously wounded by Philistine arrows. Then he commanded his armor bearer to slay him "lest these uncircumcized come and thrust me through, and make sport of me."[2] The armor bearer refused and Saul fell upon his sword, killing himself. Saul's words express the motive uppermost in his mind: it was offensive to his dignity (sense of self-worth) to be killed by these contemptible uncircumcized persons. Added to this was the further indignity--and indignity is the tarnishing of one's sense of self-worth--that the Philistines should mock him after his death. What does mock mean? It is to express contempt for another. It is assertion that the

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[1]Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams (New York: Avon Books, 1967), p. 288.

[2]I Sam. 31:4.

person mocked no longer has his former real or fancied excellence, and that the mocker is now superior in excellence. To mock a person is simply to assert in triumph that he has little or no basis for self-esteem. Mockery has no terrors for the person who is perfectly secure in his self-esteem, but which of us is that secure? For all but the sage who has entered Nirvana while still in this body, or the saint of highest degree, contempt for ourselves expressed by others is a threat to our self-esteem. But why should Saul fear such mockery after his death? The reader has frequently observed that many men find powerful motivation in the consideration of what people will think of them after they have departed this earth. Even, perhaps especially, many of those who believe that death is complete oblivion are thus concerned about their posthumous reputation. It seems that their present self-esteem depends to a significant extent upon their anticipation of what people will think of them after they are gone.

Another suicide we find in the Bible is that of Abimelech, king of Israel. Besieging a tower in the town of Thebes, Abimelech suffered a fractured skull from a piece of millstone thrown down by a woman. Abimelech commanded his armor bearer to kill him, "lest men say of me, 'A woman killed him.'"[1] The armor bearer did as he was commanded. Here again we see the motivation of the suicide was to avoid

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[1]Judges 9:54.

humiliation (loss of reputation and thus loss of self-esteem), even posthumous humiliation.

But is it necessary thus to relate loss of reputation to loss of self-esteem? Can it be that both Saul and Abimelech feared loss of reputation but not loss of self-esteem? In answer to this we must pose the question, why would they fear loss of reputation? Is it not because the esteem that others have for us is a major factor in determining our self-esteem? The opinion that others have of us is the mirror into which we look to see our own self-worth, to a large extent. Our own self-worth is the thing we are ultimately concerned about, and the opinion others have of us is of moment as a gauge for estimating our self-worth. Once again, we except the ego-less enlightened sage, if such exist, and the saint eager for contempt, expressed in the prayer of St. Francis, paraphrased: "Lord, deliver me from being accepted, praised and admired; Lord, grant that I may be ridiculed, despised and held in contempt." The possible motivation for this we have considered in our discussion of humility.

The last case of suicide mentioned in the Old Testament is that of Ahithophel. Ahithophel had given Absalom, revolting against his father David, the advice to attack the retreating David and his men immediately, before they had time to recover. Ahithophel had for many years been revered for the sagacity of his counsel, "it was as if a man should consult God." It was unthinkable to reject the

advice of the great grey eminence Ahithophel. But Absalom was persuaded to do just that, conned by Chusai, a friend of David pretending to be on Absalom's side. The rejection of his advice in this matter of utmost importance Ahithophel rightly felt as a rejection of himself, for his self-worth was founded upon his long and acclaimed role as a counselor. He also accurately foresaw the ensuing disaster that would befall Absalom's party and himself as a member of that party. He went home, put his affairs in order, and hanged himself.[1] Ahithophel had lost his most prized good, his reputation as a counselor, and was faced with the imminent loss of property and his life at the hands of David's forces. Self-esteem is awareness of good possessed; perceived loss of good is loss of self-esteem. To put an end to this intolerable pain Ahithophel hanged himself.

Hanging was also the method chosen by the suicide we read of in the New Testament, Judas Iscariot. Judas, when he saw that Jesus was condemned, was stricken by remorse, saying "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood,"[2] and hanged himself with a halter. Here is self-hatred, the extreme form of low self-esteem, for crime committed.

Conclusion on case histories

In all five cases of suicide mentioned in this ancient record of an alien culture we find that the triggering cause was present and/or impending humiliation, whether that

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[1] II Sam. 17:23. [2] Matt. 27:3-5.

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humiliation resulted from the actions of others or from the past behavior of the suicide himself. Humiliation is "an offense against the pride or self-respect of."[1]

Additional Insights Into the Problem of Suicide

Collected Thoughts of a Suicidologist

Although in his article of the above title Howard Bogard does not provide a systematic theory of suicide, he does offer some insights which are in perfect harmony with the self-esteem theory. For instance:

> I do, however, find it rare in the treatment--both successful and unsuccessful--of suicidal patients not to readily perceive omnipotent and chronic rage. Rage related to feelings of rejection, abandonment, loss of status, impotence and, as is so often observed by suicidologists, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.[2]

As we have developed previously, rage is a reaction against the person or persons we feel to be responsible for our loss in self-esteem. Occasionally that person is oneself. The conditions that Bogard lists as triggering the rage are clearly self-esteem injuring situations: rejection, loss of status, etc.

Bogard spells this out with sufficient clarity to make unnecessary further comment:

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[1]Funk and Wagnalls, New Desk Standard Dictionary, s.v. "Humiliation."

[2]Howard M. Bogard, "Collected Thoughts of a Suicidologist," in Identifying Suicide Potential, eds. Dorothy B. Anderson and Lenora J. McClean (New York: Behavioral Publications, 1971). p. 29.

> Overinvestment in work, career, or for that matter a love object, always tenuously masks underlying feelings of worthlessness. To feel worthless is to feel unloved and unlovable and, as such, better said by Kierkegaard "we stand denuded and see the intolerable abyss of ourselves." Thus with no self-esteem and with no narcissism, why live?[1]

Suicide: Psychoanalytic Point of View

Herbert Hendin, author of Suicide in Scandinavia offers in The Cry for Help some insights gleaned from his years of experience with suicidal patients and research into the problem.

> . . . when the depression is in reaction to the loss of a person, the relationship often has been a markedly dependent and symbiotic one and one in which the patient's self-esteem was contingent upon the relationship.
>
> I can say something of several recent situations that I have seen where serious suicide attempts followed sudden financial failure. The response to the loss of money was similar to that of the loss of a person in the collapsing effect it had on the self-esteem of these patients. . . . The man who loses a large amount of money and reacts with a suicide attempt thus will often differ from the man who doesn't in that his self-esteem is more dependent on his financial position.[2]

Hendin's wide experience has shown him that the key factor in at least two of the most frequent causes of suicide, financial difficulties and the loss of a loved one (through rejection or death) is the blow to the victim's self-esteem.

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[1]Ibid., p. 30.

[2]Herbert Hendin, "Suicide: Psychoanalytic Point of View," in The Cry for Help, eds. Norman L. Farberow and Edwin S. Schneidman (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), p. 184.

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The "Loss Theory" of Suicide

In "Suicide and Loss in Social Interaction" Warren Breed proposes a theory which harmonizes perfectly with our self-esteem theory of suicide. He takes as his starting point nine essays appearing in The Cry for Help, in which the authors summarize the theories of Freud, Adler, Horney, Sullivan and others. In each essay Breed finds the idea of loss figuring prominently. Three types of loss predominate: loss of job, loss of a loved person, loss of mutuality. The person who has lost "mutuality" is one who cannot maintain satisfactory personal relationships with others. But before the person who has suffered such losses is impelled to commit suicide, two further conditions must be fulfilled. The person must be aware of the loss keenly, in the sense that he is humiliated by it, and secondly, "the individual's psychic structure must impel him to suicide rather than to some less final course of adaptation."[1]

The dynamics Breed proposes for the loss-suicide sequence is this: the individual realizes the low opinion others have of him, this lowers his own self-conception to the point where he decided he would be better off dead.

> The variable is the fact of loss for the suicide person. The needed mechanism must identify a general process whereby the individual suffering loss places a particular kind of meaning to his loss, so that he decides he is better off dead than alive.

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[1]Warren Breed, "Suicide and Loss in Social Interaction," in Essays in Self-Destruction, ed. Edwin S. Shneidman (New York: Science House, 1967), p. 190.

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> The mechanism I wish to suggest brings into action the process of self-evaluation, as mediated through the individual's taking the role of other persons toward himself and, in these cases, resulting in a negative self-conception. This theory is associated with James, Baldwin, and Colley ("the looking glass self") and especially with George Herbert Mead, founder of the "symbolic interaction" school. It assumes that one attitude central to the human being is his attitude toward himself and that he must maintain, on balance, a favorable self-conception.[1]

The author goes on at some length to spell out his thesis that we maintain a favorable self-image by means of the social approval we receive from others. When that approval is lost, the individual loses confidence in himself, his performance suffers, with resulting increased loss of social approval, and so on in a descending spiral until "the resulting strain eventually becomes too much to bear."[2]

Of course suicide is not the only alternative for such an individual. Instead, he may "vow to try harder next time, reduce his level of aspirations, engage in other mechanisms of ego defense . . . or drift into other deviant modes of behavior. . . ."[3] Pinpointing reasons why a particular individual chooses the suicide alternative was not the author's purpose.

Breed's theory is in harmony with our self-esteem theory in the principal point: an unbearable loss of self-esteem is the cause (necessary but not necessitating) of suicide. His further feature that this loss of self-esteem results from a loss of social approval we agree with in

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[1]Ibid., p. 198. [2]Ibid.

[3]Ibid., p. 200.

general, making the reservation that occasionally a person may suffer a loss of self-esteem although he is basking in social approval, and the further reservation that occasionally we find an individual who is inundated with denunciation from all quarters but still has a solid self-esteem.

Attitudes Toward Self in Suicidal Individuals[1]

The point of departure for this piece of research was the "widespread common assumption" that the suicidal individual has a low self-esteem. Further aggravating this low self-image is, according to a "commonly held assumption," the tendency of the suicidal person to view others more highly than himself. The author found it surprising that there had been no systematic attempt to gather data on the attitudes of self-destructive individuals toward self and others. To fill this information vacuum he conducted the following experiment.

Subjects: Forty-five Caucasian males in veterans' hospitals. Fifteen were normal, fifteen had difficulties diagnosed as psychosomatic, and fifteen had made suicide attempts. None were psychotic.

Test: Subjects' attitudes toward self and others were measured according to the Osgood, Suci and Tannenbaum method, with regard to good-bad, active-passive, and

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[1]Charles Neuringer "Attitudes Toward Self in Suicidal Individuals," Life Threatening Behavior 4 (Spring 1974): 96-106.

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effective-powerless dimensions.

Results: Suicidal patients showed a significantly lower self-esteem than did either the normal or the psychosomatic patients. Also, the suicidal patients rated "other people" significantly higher than did the other two groups. Thus the differential between low rating for self and high rating for others was greater in the case of the suicidal group.

This offers confirmation of our own theory that the suicidal person is suffering from a self-esteem problem. Our second necessary condition for suicide, namely that the person sees no hope for improving his situation, is also supported by the author of this article:

> The findings in this study will probably not come as a great surprise to any student of the psychodynamics of suicide. A low self-concept has been one of the axiomatic assumptions of those who speculate about the conditions nurturing suicidal decisions (Farberow, 1950). What is surprising is the extent of the negative self-evaluation. One might expect that the psychosomatic subjects would also have a low opinion of themselves. However, they cannot (in this study) be distinguished from the normal subjects in terms of the level of positiveness of self-appraisal. Their psycho-physical illness may serve as a self-saving defense procedure, allowing them to avoid a negative self-encounter. The hypothesis that suicide is only a possibility when the individual is bereft of face-saving defensive strategies may have some validity.[1]

This study brings out a point that had not occurred to us previously. That is, the suicidal individual tends to have a higher opinion of the capabilities and excellences of other people than does the normal person. This of course

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[1]Ibid., p. 104.

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compounds his agonies, pointing up more sharply by comparison his own inadequacies.

> It was of interest to note that the suicidal individual tended to perceive other people in a much more positive light than did the psychosomatic and normal subjects. These latter groups did not perceive other as being essentially different from themselves. . . .
>
> The gap of divergency between self and others may be most critical for the conditions leading to suicidal behavior. The suicidal person seems to perceive himself as being constantly "one down" when he compares himself to others. They seem to be ever so better, more active and stronger than he. The possibility of closing this gap (i.e., coming up to their level) may be perceived as impossible, and the suicidal person falls back feeling defeated and hopeless.[1]

The data in this study showed a good level of significance--$p = .05$ to $p = .01$. The author suggests longitudinal studies to show whether the tendency of the suicidal person to high-rate others is a contributing cause to the suicide, or merely a spin-off from the suicidal person's low self-esteem.

Rochlin on Suicide

Gregory Roohlin, practicing psychiatrist and psychoanalyst and professor of psychiatry at the Harvard Medical School, in his book Man's Aggression: The Defense of the Self, develops the thesis that both the heroic and the despair type of suicide are motivated by the individual's feeling, conscious or unconscious, that his self-esteem interests are best served by his death.

> The common denominator in suicide which the hero shares with the villain is in the wish to quit life.

> The aim in either case is the sacrifice of oneself. And it is dictated by feeling less worthy than if the self were preserved. What may appear to be a resignation to death, either through suicide or a heroic death, is in actuality a dread of the degradation of self from which there is not expectation of recovery. The need to redeem oneself from ignominy is the compelling and governing wish.[1]

Rochlin has stated our own thesis precisely.

Conclusion to "Additional Insights"

Bogard, in his "Collected Thoughts of a Suicidologist," gives us the pith of his observations "Thus with no self-esteem and with no narcissism, why live?"

Hendin remarks that the difference between the person who commits suicide upon the loss of a loved person or of his financial position and the person who does not commit suicide after a similar loss is that the former has based his self-esteem largely upon the object now lost.

In the "loss theory of suicide" Warren Breed proposes that the individual's self-esteem is based primarily upon his estimation of what others think of him. His suggested dynamics of suicide: the individual suffers a severe loss; he becomes convinced that others have a lower esteem for him; this adversely affects his social performance, resulting in further losses; the spiraling effect can lead to an unbearable depression of his self-esteem.

Charles Neuringer set out to investigate the widespread assumption that the suicidal individual has a low

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[1]Gregory Rochlin, Man's Aggression: The Defense of the Self (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1973), p. 15.

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self-esteem. His experiments showed, with a .05 level of significance, that suicidal persons not only have lower self-esteem than do normal or even "psychosomatic" persons, but also rate other persons significantly higher than do the latter two groups. Thus there is a double effect combining to give the suicidal person a sense of worthlessness.

Gregory Rochlin states that the motive for suicide is anguish at self-esteem loss with no hope of recoup. He phrases it as "dread of the degradation of the self from which there is not expectation of recovery."

Effect of Religious Belief on Suicide Rate

We have maintained in our theory of suicide that the individual is less likely to commit suicide if he is convinced that this will mean a worsening of his situation, a move "from the frying pan into the fire." This means we have taken the position that religious belief definitely can have an effect on suicide rate. According to our theory, we would expect to find a lower suicide rate in a population where there is a prevalent belief that hell exists and that the suicide is likely to go there.

This is contrary to one of the most publicized of Durkheim's conclusions. He maintains that religious belief in itself has no effect on suicide rate; the lower rate he found among Catholics he attributes to the fact that Catholic societies have a higher degree of social integration than do Protestant. To support his contention that religious belief is not the cause for the differing suicide rates

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among Catholics, Protestants and Jews, Durkheim offers two arguments: first, Protestants believe in God and the afterlife just as strongly as do Catholics; second, the Jewish religion does not emphasize an afterlife, and does not proscribe suicide, and yet the Jews have the lowest suicide rate of the three groups (this was true in Durkheim's day.)

> Yet they both [Protestantism and Catholicism] prohibit suicide with equal emphasis; not only do they penalize it morally with great severity, but both teach that a new life begins beyond the tomb where men are punished for their evil actions, and Protestantism just as well as Catholicism numbers suicide among them. Finally, in both cults these prohibitions are of divine origin; they are represented not as the logical conclusion of correct reason, but God Himself is their authority. Therefore, if Protestantism is less unfavorable to the development of suicide, it is not because of a different attitude from that of Catholicism.[1]

> . . . we see why, generally speaking, religion has a prophylactic effect upon suicide. It is not, as has sometimes been said, because it condemns it more unhesitatingly than secular morality, nor because the idea of God gives its precepts exceptional authority which subdues the will, nor because the prospect of a future life and the terrible punishments there awaiting the guilty give its proscriptions a greater sanction than that of human laws. The Protestant believes in God and the immorality [sic.] "immortality" is of course intended] of the soul no less than the Catholic. More than this, the religion with the least inclination to suicide, Judaism, is the very one not formally proscribing it and also the one in which the idea of immortality plays the least role. . . . The beneficent influence of religion is therefore not due to the special nature of religious conceptions. If religion protects man against the desire for self-destruction, it is not that it preaches the respect for his own person to him with arguments sui generis; but because it is a society. What constitutes this society is the existence of a certain number of beliefs and practices common to all the faithful, traditional and thus obligatory. The more numerous and strong these collective states of mind

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[1]Durkheim, Suicide, p. 157.

> are, the stronger the integration of the religious community, and also the greater its preservative value. The details of dogmas and rites are secondary.[1]

We do not intend to minimize the restraining effect that social integration has upon the suicide rate. Such an effect is entirely in harmony with the self-esteem theory, inasmuch as the more social ties a person has with other individuals, the more bolstered his self-esteem will be, other things being equal.

However, we are not prepared to eliminate the direct influence of religious belief upon the suicide rate. It seems plausible that the person who believes that he may, by his suicide, be entering an existence of total pain and total loss of self-esteem, i.e., be going to hell, will be likely to be deterred from suicide. Conceivable of course is the person who is so distraught by the pain of his present tragedy that he can thing of nothing else and plunges into suicide. However, studies of suicide indicate that the more typical case is the person who has thought about this course, and even talked about it, for weeks previously.

To test this hypothesis we compared George Gallup's surveys on religious beliefs[1] in various countries with suicide rates for those countries, taken from the United Nations Demographic Yearbook.[2] One of the questions in the

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[1]Ibid., p. 169.

[2]The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 2174.

[2]Information Please Almanac, 1974, p. 729.

Gallup poll, covering twelve nations, was "Do you believe in hell?" Responses were in three categories: yes, no, no opinion. If our theory is correct, the suicides would be most likely to be found among the "no" category, so we predict that there will be a correlation between suicide rate and the percentage of "no" responses in each country.

In one of the nations, Uruguay, the poll was only conducted in the cities, whereas the suicide rate given for Uruguay in the Demographic Yearbook is for the entire country. Therefore we have eliminated Uruguay from the comparison. To determine the degree of correlation between suicide rate and disbelief in hell we will use the method of the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient, an accepted statistical measure.

Looking at Table 1, we find the countries listed according to suicide rate, the highest rates being at the top. Compared with this is the percentage of the population surveyed who answered "no" to the question "do you believe in hell?" These latter figures are rated according to their rank order, that is, the country with highest percentage is rated "1" and so on. The column headed "D" is the difference between this rank order figure and the suicide rate rank order figure. Using the formula for the Spearman rank correlation coefficient:[1]

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[1]Richard P. Runyon and Audrey Haber, Fundamentals of Behavioral Statistics, 2nd ed. (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publ. Co., 1971), p. 103.

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF NATIONAL SUICIDE RATES WITH PERCENTAGE DISBELIEF IN HELL

Country	Suicide Rate[1]	Rank Order	Percent Who Do Not Believe in Hell[2]	Rank Order	D	D^2
Finland	23.3	1	49	8	7	49
Austria	22.4	2	68	3	1	1
Sweden	22.0	3	71	1	2	4
West Germany	21.6	4	62	5	1	1
Switzerland	17.1	5	67	4	1	1
France	15.3	6	70	2	4	16
U.S.A.	11.0	7	29	10	3	9
Norway	8.2	8	45	9	1	1
Netherlands	8.1	9	61	6	3	9
Great Britain	8.0	10	58	7	3	9
Greece	3.2	11	25	11	0	0
						$\Sigma D^2 = 100$

[1] Information Please Almanac, 1974, p. 729. (Deaths per 100,000 population, 1970).

[2] The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971 (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 2174. (Survey made in mid-1968).

$r = 1 - \frac{6\Sigma D^2}{n(n^2-1)}$, where n is the number of countries, and ΣD^2 is the summation of all the D^2.

we obtain: $r = 1 - \frac{6(100)}{11(121-1)} = 0.55$

Referring to Table 2 we find that for n = 11, this r of 0.55 gives us a level of significance of .05 for a "one-tailed" test. Our test is one-tailed inasmuch as we predicted in advance the direction of the correlation. "Level of significance" refers to the likelihood of such a correlation occurring purely by chance. Stated simply, this means that in our case there is only one chance in twenty of the data showing purely by coincidence the correlation we have observed. In sociology this is ordinarily taken as good evidence in support of the hypothesis, although by no means a definitive proof.

Looking again at our data, we see that Finland causes our correlation coefficient to be much lower than it would be using the other ten countries. There may be other factors operating strongly in Finland to run the suicide rate up. If we eliminate this "maverick" from the picture, the Spearman correlation coefficient is 0.86. From Table 2 we see that this corresponds to a level of significance better than 0.005, a value which delights the heart of the researcher. This means that there are only five chances in a thousand that the correlation between suicide rate and disbelief in hell in those ten countries is a mere

TABLE 2

CRITICAL VALUES OF SPEARMAN'S r (RANK-ORDER CORRELATION COEFFICIENT)

	Level of Significance for One-Tailed Test			
	.05	.025	.01	.005
	Level of Significance for Two-Tailed Test			
n*	.10	.05	.02	.01
5	.900	1.000	1.000	--
6	.829	.886	.943	1.000
7	.714	.786	.893	.929
8	.643	.738	.833	.881
9	.600	.683	.783	.833
10	.564	.648	.746	.794
12	.506	.591	.712	.777
14	.456	.544	.645	.715
16	.425	.506	.601	.665
18	.399	.475	.564	.625
20	.377	.450	.534	.591
22	.359	.428	.508	.562
24	.343	.409	.485	.537
26	.329	.392	.465	.515
28	.317	.377	.448	.496
30	.306	.364	.432	.478

*n = number of pairs.

[1]Runyon and Haber, Fundamentals of Behavioral Statistics, p. 301.

coincidence. But is there any justification for thus eliminating Finland from the comparison, that is, can we find some factor at work in Finland that is unique and causes a disproportionately high suicide rate?

Just such a unique factor is proposed by Veli Verkko in his book Homicides and Suicides in Finland. His thesis is that Finns cannot "handle their liquor." After a few drinks Finns are prone to become violent, resulting in an unusually high rate of both homicide and suicide. He quotes from a study of alcohol tolerance in Finland:

> "Sober, Paavo is discretion personified, but when drunk he is eager to find fault with his neighbor. Paavo is peculiar in that, on the whole, he is unable to settle up with his enemy peaceably. He avoids reconciliations until the very last moment, and hatred piles up in his heart. If, on top of all this, he likes strong drink, the settlement is affected in a way which is frighteningly attested by Finnish criminal statistics. . . .[1]
>
> It has now been convincingly shown that the direct influence of strong drinks on suicides has been so strong that good and poor alcohol situations do in fact determine the trend of development of suicides. That this is possible can hardly be explained except by the unfortunate inability of the Finnish nation to hold its liquor well--which finds its expression in crimes against one's neighbour's life, and is even turned against one's own self in many cases, causing loss of life. The reply to the question put at the beginning of this chapter, whether any causal connection exists between suicides and the poor ability of a nation to hold its liquor, must therefore be in the affirmative.[2]

The author points out that such a problem does not exist to any comparable degree in the Scandinavian countries,

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[1]Veli Verkko, Homicides and Suicides in Finland (Copenhagen: G. E. C. Gads Forlag, 1951), p. 90.

[2]Ibid., p. 135.

and suggests that its origin lies in the Finnish physical make-up, different because of a different national origin.

> It is obvious that in their typology and temperament the Finnish nation differs from its western neighbour nations. This can be explained from the fact that the original home of the Finns, whence they came to Finland, is far from that of the Scandinavians, and that the Finnish language belongs to the Fenno-Ugrian language group, which differs radically from the Germanic language group of the Scandinavians.[1]

Therefore it seems that we are justified in excluding Finland from a comparison of national suicide rate with level of religious belief. We are left then with a gratifying "level of significance" of .005 for our ten nation comparison.

The data also provide a possible answer to problems that have been bones of contention among suicidologists for years. First, why should Norway have a so much lower suicide rate than do its Scandinavian neighbors (8.2 per 100,000 as compared with 22.0 for Sweden and 20.8 for Denmark). Various answers have been offered and rejected, but to our knowledge this factor of differing levels of disbelief in hell has not yet been recognized. Norway has a considerably lower level of disbelief than do nearby nations: 45 percent as compared with 71 percent for Sweden, 62 percent for West Germany, 67 percent for Switzerland, 61 percent for Netherlands, and 58 percent for Great Britain. No data on this question are available for Denmark, but the religious climate there seems to be much like that of Sweden. We do not

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[1] Ibid., p. 144.

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suggest that this is the sole factor making for a lower suicide rate in Norway,[1] but it seems plausible as a contributing factor.

A second puzzling problem for suicidologists has been the relatively high suicide rate in Austria, a nation that is 95 percent Catholic, whereas Durkheim's general principle, borne out by statistics, was that Catholic nations have a lower suicide rate than Protestant nations. The suicide rate in Austria is much higher than that of Protestant England or Norway. This is thoroughly in harmony with our data and theory. Our data show that with regard to this particular item of religious belief Austria is more secularized than either Norway or Great Britain. "Catholic" Austria is thus revealed to be most un-Catholic on this point of religious belief. The same is true of France, and its suicide rate is also relatively high.

We are certainly not proposing that the sole, nor necessarily even principal, determining factor in suicide rate is religious belief. There is a multitude of triggering causes leading to suicide, and we are only proposing religious belief as one possible deterrent factor. Therefore there is no reason in our theory to expect any exact proportion between suicide rate and religious belief, or

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[1]Another factor may be the fact that a vastly higher percentage of Norwegians are merchant seamen than is true for any other nation. Is it possible that the disgruntled Norwegian, when tempted to suicide, can easily avail himself of another alternative, get away from it all by shipping out?

lack of it. Thus, for example, the fact that the United States has a higher level of religious belief on the item in question than does Norway, and yet has a higher suicide rate, poses no problem for our theory. With the stronger deterrent factor there can co-exist stronger impelling causes which overbalance the deterrent factor.

To confirm or disconfirm the discovered correlation between suicide rate and religious belief we compared suicide rates among foreign-born persons in the United States with the level of belief in their native countries. The assumption here is that the foreign-born in the U.S. will have roughly the same degree of belief in this matter that obtains in their country of origin. At least, the relative ranking between nationalities will be much the same. It also entails the assumption that the relative levels of belief in the various countries have not changed substantially between the time the foreign-born left their native land (sometime prior to 1959) and 1968 when the Gallup belief survey was made.

The results of the comparison are shown in Table 3. All available comparisons are included.

These data give us a Spearman correlation coefficient of 0.92. From Table 2 we see that this means a level of significance (for n = 5) of better than 0.05. This supports our previous findings.

Although this gives good evidence of a strong correlation between suicide rate and level of belief, it does not

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establish a cause and effect relationship. It is possible that both the suicide rate and the level of belief are functions of a third more basic variable. We will consider this possibility in some detail, but first we want to respond to Durkheim's reasons for concluding that religious belief per se does not have an effect on suicide rate.

TABLE 3

COMPARISON OF SUICIDE RATES AMONG FOREIGN-BORN WITH PERCENTAGE DISBELIEF IN HELL

Country of Birth	Suicide Rate[1]	Rank Order	Percent in Native Country Who Do Not Believe in Hell[2]	Rank Order	D	D^2
Sweden	34.2	1	71	1	0	0
Austria	32.5	2	68	2	0	0
West Germany	25.7	3	62	3	0	0
Norway	23.7	4	45	5	1	1
Great Britain	19.2	5	58	4	1	1
						$\Sigma D^2 = 2$

[1]Louis I. Dublin, Suicide, A Sociological and Statistical Study (New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1963), p. 216.

[2]The Gallup Poll, p. 2174.

He states that Catholic and Protestant religions do not differ notably in their teachings about suicide, therefore religious teaching cannot account for the differing suicide rates between Catholic and Protestant nations. That

Catholic and Protestant religions do not differ in their traditional teaching on this point is a generalization that obscures some theological differences between various Protestant traditions, as well as between these and Catholic doctrine. However, for the sake of discussion we will grant that these differences are not significant in the present case. But, relevant here is: what proportion of the populace believes in that teaching? The lower suicide rates that usually prevail in Catholic countries do not appear when the people to a large extent do not accept traditional Catholic teaching about hell, as in the case of Austria and France.

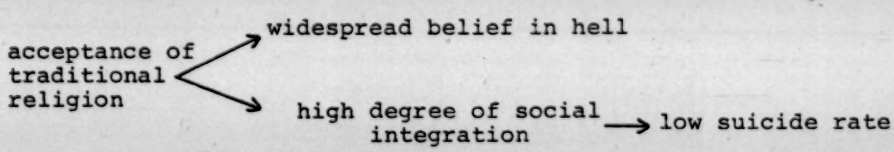
In response to Durkheim's second point, that the suicide rate among Jews is lowest of all despite the fact that their religion has little animus against it, has lost some of its cogency in view of developments since Durkheim's day. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Jewish suicide rates began to rise, until in the twentieth century they have exceeded the rates among Protestants and Catholics. Two factors contributing to this have been the latter-day diaspora of the Jews, weakening community integration, and the Nazi persecution. Louis I. Dublin, in Suicide, A Sociological and Statistical Study, comments:

> By 1900, the suicide rate for Jews was equal to, and sometimes above, that for the Protestants. By the time of World War I and immediately thereafter, the suicide rate for the Jews had risen to a point higher than for any other religious affiliation, in Prussia rising to 41.6 per 100,000 for the years 1919-1923.
>
> . . . With the coming of Hitler and his program of extermination, and the demoralizing influences of another World War, suicide grew to epidemic proportions. Even in the 1920's epidemics of suicide among Jews were recorded

in Warsaw and in various parts of Germany and Austria.[1]

Today the picture is quite different, at least in Israel. There the 1970 suicide rate was 5.2 per 100,000, one of the lowest of the "developed" nations. What are we to make of this fluctuation in the Jewish suicide rate? The low suicide periods among the Jews seem to correspond to times of high social integration within the Jewish communities. As that integration, with its ego-supporting effect, breaks down, the suicide rate rises.

Durkheim's theory can place a different interpretation on our data that show a parallel between traditional religious beliefs (Catholic or Protestant) and low suicide rates. He could argue that traditional religious beliefs indicate that the Church has a stronger hold upon the people, with the result that there is a higher degree of social integration in the nation. This of course results in a lower suicide rate, according to Durkheim, and with which we agree. But is the lower suicide rate due primarily to the higher social integration or to the deterrent effect of belief in hell? Durkheim's reasoning would present the following causal chain:



In this causal chain dogmatic belief has no direct effect on suicide rate. The correlation between dogma on hell and suicide rate only obtains because both wax or wane with acceptance of traditional religion.

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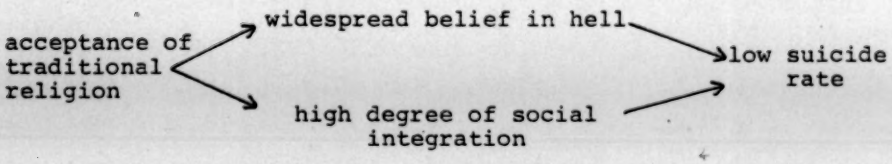
[1]Dublin, Suicide, p. 76.

Our own envisioned causal chain would be as follows:



In this model both dogma and social integration have a direct effect on suicide rate.

Which model best corresponds to reality? As a possible test we propose the following. We suggest that frequency of church attendance is a better measure of social integration than is belief in hell, inasmuch as church attendance contributes more directly to those inter-personal contacts which are the basis of social integration. With this assumption, it follows that if Durkheim's model is closer to reality, then frequency of church attendance and suicide rate will correlate more closely than will belief about hell and suicide rate. This, because frequency of church attendance is more closely tied to the determining factor, social integration, than is belief about hell. If, however, we discover that frequency of church attendance shows a poorer correlation with suicide rate than does belief about hell, this suggests that suicide rate is more directly related to belief about hell than it is to church attendance, and thus our proposed causal chain is closer to reality.

A comparison of church attendance with suicide rate is shown in Table 4. All countries for which we were able to obtain both sets of data are included.

TABLE 4

COMPARISON OF SUICIDE RATES WITH FREQUENCY OF CHURCH ATTENDANCE

Country	Suicide Rate	Rank Order	% Church Attendance Each Week[1]	Reverse Rank Order	D	D^2
Finland	23.3	1	5	1	0	0
Austria	22.4	2	38	7	5	25
Sweden	22.0	3	9	2	1	1
West Germany	21.6	4	27	5	1	1
Switzerland	17.1	5	30	6	1	1
France	15.3	6	25	4	2	4
United States	11.0	7	43	9	2	4
Norway	8.2	8	14	3	5	25
Netherlands	8.1	9	42	8	1	1
						$\Sigma D^2 = 62$

[1] The Gallup Poll, p. 2173. (Survey made in 1968.)

Computing the Spearman coefficient on the above data we find it to be 0.48. Referring to Table 2 we find that this means the correlation is non-significant. Thus, for our sample, suicide rate shows no significant relationship to church attendance. In line with our previous reasoning, this offers some support to the thesis that beliefs about hell have a direct effect on suicide rate. That is, the correlation we found in two tests between belief about hell and suicide rate is not merely a reflection of a church attendance/

social integration relationship to suicide rate.

Thus, our common-sense theory, that an individual is likely to be deterred from suicide if he believes he will thereby worsen his situation, has been supported by each of the three tests we have applied. However we do not want to claim too much for this meager empirical confirmation. We only offer it as an indicator of a line of future research, should anyone be interested. The picture is complicated by other factors which would have to be examined before any confident conclusions could be drawn. For instance, we discovered a high correlation between suicide rate and birth rate: the lower the birth rate, the higher the suicide rate; for 15 countries, a probability of .0001. Also, a correlation was found between the average age in a country and its suicide rate: the higher the average age, the higher the suicide rate; $p = .02$. And, predictably, a correlation between average age and birth rate: 12 countries, lower birth rate means higher average age, $p = .005$. These findings suggest the following hypothesis should be investigated: the prevalence of traditional religious views in a country encourages a higher birth rate (even among Protestants this proves to be true, although to a lesser degree than among Catholics), and the higher birth rate results in a lower average age in the nation, which in turn means a lower suicide rate, inasmuch as the older age groups are more "suicide-rich," to coin a barbarism. In this hypothesis, belief about hell could be merely a part of the traditional religious

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belief syndrome, and itself exerting no direct causal effect on suicide rate. Fully testing this hypothesis would require more data than we have been able to find after an extensive search.

In summary, we can see at least three possible avenues by which religious belief can have an effect on suicide rate: first, as suggested by Durkheim, traditional religious belief increases social integration and thus reduces suicide rate; second, belief in hell acts as a deterrent to suicide; and third, traditional religious belief means a higher birth rate, a lower average age, and thus a lower suicide rate. Probably there are other influences which we have not considered here.

Summary of Chapter VIII

The self-esteem theory of suicide: an individual commits suicide when he sees this as the most effective step toward a lasting gain in self-esteem, or as the most effective course of action to avoid the pain of present or imminent loss of self-esteem. Both the desire for a gain in self-esteem (through post-mortem fame) and the desire to flee a painfully low self-esteem may be found in an individual case.

The first half of this hypothesis applies preeminently to what Durkheim calls "altruistic" suicide, in societies which hold such suicides in high regard. The latter half of the hypothesis (avoidance of pain) applies to

the usual suicides that take place in Western societies. These "I can't bear to go on" suicides will only take place if the individual considers his situation hopeless, and if he believes that he will not be worsening his situation by suicide.

Freud's analysis of the melancholic's tendency toward suicide lends implicit support to the above theory. He tells us that the melancholic displays an "extraordinary fall in his self-esteem." For the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego, i.e., measuring up to the ego-ideal, which is to say, having a good self-esteem. The ego gives itself up (embraces death) when it finds itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego. This "hatred and persecution" by the super-ego is of course nothing other than the individual's self-revilings, i.e., his very low self-esteem.

Adler proposes that suicide, as well as every other example of human behavior, is motivated by man's striving to gain superiority and to flee feelings of inferiority. Specifically, he cites the following possibilities for a gain in superiority feelings through suicide: attract attention; assert one's power of life and death; obtain revenge upon others by hurting them. Even "normal" people may commit suicide to flee an unbearably humiliating situation that "has no prospect of relief." All this is entirely in accord with the self-esteem theory of suicide. Adler offers us the additional insight that the triggering cause for suicide may

be the individual's lack of tolerance for a self-esteem reversal, regardless of his absolute level of self-esteem.

Durkheim proposes social causes for suicide. Societies with insufficient social integration have a high rate of egoistic suicides; societies with very high social integration have a high rate of altruistic suicides. Societies which fail to sufficiently regulate the individual's behavior have a high rate of anomic suicides. Durkheim's detailed description of each of these types of suicide lends support to the conclusion that the altruistic suicide is seeking self-esteem from the post-mortem esteem of the community, and/or from union with the One True Reality (moksha, nirvana, etc.), while the egoistic and anomic suicides are seeking to flee the pain of a collapsed self-esteem structure.

We considered some individual cases of suicide to discover whether our self-esteem theory could explain them. As an added challenge, we chose cases from an ancient time and an alien culture, on the assumption that these would be most likely to differ from modern suicides. The cases chosen were the five mentioned in the Bible. In each case the circumstances indicated that the triggering cause was present or impending humiliation. Humiliation is, by definition, a loss in self-esteem.

Additional confirmation comes from the experimental research of Charles Neuringer, done to test the "widespread common assumption" that the suicidal person has a low self-esteem. He found that suicidal individuals have a

significantly lower self-esteem than do either normal or "psychosomatic" persons.

With regard to the influence of religious belief on suicide rate, we concurred with Durkheim's view that traditional religious belief increases social integration and thus lowers suicide rate; also, we found evidence to support the hypothesis that belief in hell has a deterrent effect on suicide; finally, traditional religious beliefs contribute to a higher birth rate, which means lower average age and thus lower suicide rate.

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CHAPTER VIII

LAUGHTER AND SELF-ESTEEM

Introduction

> There is no action that is more commonplace or that has been more widely studied than laughter. There is none that has succeeded more in exciting the curiosity both of ordinary people and of philosophers. There is none on which more observations have been collected and more theories built. But at the same time there is none that remains more unexplained.[1]

Sigmund Freud, in his book Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious cites the above quotation from a book by one of his contemporaries attempting to explain the psychology of laughter. Undeterred by the failure of previous philosophers and psychologists to satisfactorily explain laughter,[2] Freud then devotes his book to attempting to cut this Gordian knot. In justification for spending so much time and effort on what might seem to some critics to be a frivolous subject, he offers;

> Is the subject of jokes worth so much trouble? There can, I think, be no doubt of it. Leaving on one side the personal motives which make me wish to gain an insight into the problems of jokes and which will come to light in the course of these studies, I can appeal to

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1960), p. 146.

[2]At least, their failure to gain widespread acceptance for their theories.

> the fact that there is an intimate connection between all mental happenings--a fact which guarantees that a psychological discovery even in a remote field will be of an unpredictable value in other fields.[1]

Freud's own answer to the problem has met no better fate than those of his predecessors. Although his book is rich in psychological insights, his explanation of laughter as an expression of pleasure arising from psychic economy has not won him first place among the competing theorists. In view of the unheralded attempts of the great master to explain humor, it is with infinite chutzpah that the present writer proposes a definitive answer to why we laugh. But, "if you got it--or think you got it--flaunt it." My feeling of brashness is mitigated by the discovery--subsequent to the development of the theory proposed in this study--that some other writers have offered much the same explanation of laughter.

In using the term "laughter" we are referring to an expression of genuine pleasure. Thus, outside our scope of consideration are the forced laughter we sometimes summon up to cover our embarrassment, the merely polite laughter we affect to save the feelings of in inept humorist, the bitter, scornful laughter that seems to have gone out of style along with the melodrama, and of course laughter induced by chemicals, such as nitrous oxide. Included in our consideration are not only laughter resulting from appreciation of humor, but also laughter of relief from constraint, and laughter of sheer joy of living. Accordingly, ours is a theory not merely

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of humor,[1] but also of the broader field of laughter expressing pleasure.

In explanation of such laughter, the theory proposed in these pages is simply this: laughter is an expression of pleasure, arising from a sudden awareness of some good possessed by self.[2] The "good" possessed by self may be mental acuity enabling us to "get the point," it may be worldly sophistication enabling us to get the point of a double entendre, it may be some advantage or superiority we hold over another person, even in some trivial matter, it may be some personal quality of which we are proud, it may be a standard of values which we hold. In short, it may be anything the possession of which gives us a glow of satisfaction. The "awareness" need not be explicit. Customarily this awareness is automatic and instantaneous, even subconscious. Often, if questioned, the laugher is unable to say what he is laughing about. The element of "suddenness" is not necessary for pleasure, but it is necessary for laughter, or even for the sort of humor that only produces a smile.

As a synonym for "good possessed by self" we will

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[1] Laughter, of course, is not the only expression of humor. A smile, or an inner pleasure, though poker-faced, arise from the same motivation as the laugh, differing only in degree.

[2] Strictly speaking, we should add here "or thought to be possessed by self" to cover cases of self-deception. However, such an addition is cumbersome, momentarily confusing, and does not seem essential in our subsequent development of the theory.

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often use the term "our excellence," without necessarily implying any comparison with other persons. As a synonym for "awareness of good possessed by self" (or thought to be possessed by self) we will often use the term "self-esteem." Self-esteem is defined by Funk and Wagnalls[1] as "a good opinion of oneself; an overestimation of oneself." The latter pejorative part of this definition we do not necessarily intend in our use of the term self-esteem. Rather we mean only an awareness of some good possessed by self, or thought to be possessed by self. This amounts to "a good opinion of oneself" in a particular aspect at a particular time. Of course in some cases that awareness of good possessed by self may be illusory, as in an overestimation of one's good qualities.

We will test this theory in four ways: first, by discovering its ability to explain why we find pleasure in each of the various types of humor; secondly, by comparing it with other theories of humor to see which is more basic, comprehensive and simple; and thirdly, by attempting to answer objections against it which have been proposed by various authors. This last is possible because of the close similarity between our theory and that of Thomas Hobbes, whose theory has been widely supported or opposed by writers on humor. Throughout, we will test the ability of the self-esteem theory to explain a few special cases of laughter.

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[1]Funk and Wagnalls, New Standard Desk Dictionary, 1948.

The first two objectives we can combine by considering the writings of Sigmund Freud on humor. He divides humor into jokes (wit), the comic, and humor proper, and we will attempt to explain each type by our theory. Freud's exhaustive treatment of the subject, the value of several of his insights, and the authority of his name in matters psychological have induced us to devote a large part of these pages to his theory.

For the reader who is anticipating an amusing and entertaining treatment of humor we quote the opening paragraph of Max Eastman's book, Enjoyment of Laughter:

> I must warn you, reader, that it is not the purpose of this book to make you laugh. As you know, nothing kills the laugh quicker than to explain a joke. I intend to explain all jokes, and the proper and logical outcome will be, not only that you will not laugh now, but that you will never laugh again. So prepare for the descending gloom.[1]

Freud's Analysis of Jokes, the Comic, and Humor

Freud divides his consideration of the humorous into three categories: jokes,[2] the comic, and humor, proper. Unable to find in his writings a name for a broader category that embraces all three, I have taken the liberty of

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[1]Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1936), p. xv.

[2]The German word "der Witz" is sometimes translated as "wit," but James Strachey, in the preface to his translation Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, objects to the rendition "wit" as implying in English the misleading concept of a more intellectual and refined type of humor. Actually the German "der Witz" is broader, including low and vulgar humor as well. For this reason Strachey prefers the rendition "jokes."

calling it "the humorous." To arrive at Freud's distinction between the three categories we must put together scraps that he offers us scattered throughout his Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious. First, a joke is made, but the comic is found.[1] The joke is an artificial construct, but the comic is noticed in the appearance, behavior or speech of other persons. And here Freud mentions a fact that we will refer to later as being of significance--the comic is found essentially in persons, and only in other things (puppies, monkeys, etc.) by their "transference," i.e., by their analogy with people.

A second difference Freud offers us between the joke and the comic: the comic requires only two persons, the person who is comical, wittingly or unwittingly, and the amused observer; whereas the joke requires three people: the teller, the one about whom the joke is being told, (present or absent), and the hearer.

> We have had no difficulty in discovering that socially the comic behaves differently from jokes. It can be content with two persons: a first who finds what is comic and a second in whom it is found. The third person, to whom the comic thing is told, intensifies the comic process but adds nothing new to it. In a joke this third person is indispensable for the completion of the pleasure-producing process; but on the other hand the second person may be absent, except where a tendentious, aggressive joke is concerned.[2]

This distinction according to the number of people involved Freud also applies to his third category, humor. Humor needs only one person. This term "humor" Freud

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[1]Freud, Jokes, p. 181. [2]Ibid.

reserves for those cases in which a person is laughing at himself. The occasion may be a bit of clumsiness or a ludicrous mistake he has made, or even a painful situation he finds himself in, but which he rises above and finds genuinely amusing. The situation that arouses amusement at self is one that ordinarily would arouse unpleasant emotions, perhaps embarrassment, disgruntlement, sorrow. But the individual transcends these emotions and actually finds a sort of pleasure in the situation. This "laughing at oneself" Freud acclaims as "one of the highest psychic achievements."[1] He lavishes other terms of praise upon humor, a sharp contrast with his usual detached analyses, customarily so lacking in value judgments.

Freud offers us a further distinction between the categories of the humorous, this time based upon their psychic "location." Humor and the comic remain preconscious: they are not conscious because they do not draw upon repressed material.

> Humorous displacement is thus just as impossible under the glare of conscious attention as is comic comparison; like the latter, it is tied to the condition of remaining preconscious or automatic. . . .[2]
>
> On the whole humour is closer to the comic than to jokes. It shares with the former its psychical localization in the preconscious, whereas jokes, as we have had to suppose, are formed as a compromise between the unconscious and the preconscious.[3]

Jokes are rooted in the unconscious because they derive their amusement value from ideas that have been

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[1]Ibid., p. 228. [2]Ibid., p. 233. [3]Ibid., p. 234.

repressed into the unconscious. Freud divides jokes into "innocent" and "tendentious." Innocent jokes are puns, plays upon words, nonsense gambits, etc., and derive their amusement value from our childhood love of nonsense, which has been largely repressed by our adult critical faculties. Tendentious jokes are far more common and provoke heartier laughter.[1] Their purpose is to provide a socially acceptable expression for obscene or aggressive feelings, feelings which are ordinarily repressed into the unconscious because of their socially unacceptable nature.

> Where a joke is not an aim in itself--that is, where it is not an innocent one--there are only two purposes that it may serve, and these two can themselves be subsumed under a single heading. It is either a hostile joke (serving the purpose of aggressiveness, satire, or defense) or an obscene joke (serving the purpose of exposure).[2]

Later in his book Freud expands his classification of tendentious jokes into four: obscene, aggressive (hostile), cynical (critical, blasphemous), and sceptical (attacking not a person or institution, but the certainty of our knowledge itself).[3] However, it seems to me that the latter two categories are merely a further specification of the aggressive category, according to whether the attack is against persons (hostile), against institutions and values (cynical), or against our knowledge itself (sceptical).

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[1]"A non-tendentious joke scarcely ever achieves the sudden burst of laughter which makes tendentious ones so irresistable." Ibid., p. 96.

[2]Ibid., p. 97.

[3]Ibid., p. 115.

Summing up Freud's distinction between jokes, the comic, and humor, may we offer the following condensation: jokes rely upon words for their effect, and are based upon material ordinarily repressed into the unconscious; the comic may be concerned with appearance, behavior or words of another, and repressed material need not be involved; and humor is amusement at one's own foibles or mistakes. Put in another way, in the comic we are laughing at someone else, in jokes we are laughing with someone else at another person or institution or idea, and in humor we are laughing at ourselves.

Why We Laugh, According to Freud

Laughter is an expression of pleasure, according to Freud. He does qualify this statement with "not all laughter, it is true, but certainly laughter at a joke."[1] Obviously excluded from this would be nervous laughter, forced laughter, merely polite laughter, and probably scornful laughter. In a treatment of the humorous, the question of why we laugh resolves itself into a question of why we find pleasure in humorous things. The thesis developed in Freud's book Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious is that jokes, the comic, and humor give us pleasure because they afford us an opportunity for psychic economy. Just as the opportunity for economy in financial expenditure gives us pleasure, so also we take pleasure in an opportunity for economy in the expenditure of psychic energy. As a further analogy, Freud offers us the example, common in his day, of

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[1]Ibid., p. 148.

the person who has been accustomed to the fuss and bother of lighting several gas mantles to illuminate a room and now feels the thrill of pleasure in accomplishing the same result by merely flipping one electric switch.[1]

Applying the same principle that economy of money or of effort yields pleasure to economy of psychic energy, he concludes:

> The pleasure in jokes has seemed to us to arise from an economy in expenditure upon inhibition, the pleasure in the comic is from an economy in expenditure upon ideation (upon cathexis) and the pleasure in humor from an economy in expenditure upon feeling. In all three methods of working of our mental apparatus the pleasure is derived from an economy.[2]

Psychic economy in tendentious jokes

Let us consider what he means by each of the above three aspects of psychic economy. First he analyzes the tendentious variety, the most common and most appreciated jokes, which he classifies as either aggressive or obscene. Such jokes offer us an opportunity to release inhibitions against the expression of hostile or sexual feelings, and to give some vent to those feelings in a socially acceptable manner. Since the establishment and maintenance of inhibitions represents an investment of psychic energy, the temporary relaxation of the inhibition is a saving of psychic energy. This gives pleasure, and the saved energy is discharged in the laugh.

. . . we shall not be relying too much on speculation

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[1]Ibid., p. 157.

[2]Ibid., p. 236.

> if we assert that both for erecting and for maintaining a psychical inhibition some 'psychical expenditure' is required. . . .[1] We take note of the fact that 'economy of expenditure on inhibition or suppression' appears to be the secret of the pleasurable effect of tendentious jokes . . .[2]
>
> . . . the hearer of the joke laughs with the quota of psychical energy which has become free through the lifting of the inhibitory cathexis; we might say he laughs this quota off.[3]

Psychic economy in innocent jokes

Somewhat more complex is the analysis of the innocent joke, the pale cousin of the tendentious joke. The varieties of innocent jokes seem to operate in somewhat different ways. Those jokes whose essence is a play upon words achieve a psychic saving by focussing our attention on the sound of the words rather than on the meaning, which latter would require a greater psychic investment.

> In one groups of these jokes (play upon words) the technique consisted in focussing our psychical attitude on the sound of the word instead of upon its meaning--in making the (acoustic) word-presentation itself take the place of its significance as given by its relations to thing-presentations. It may really be suspected that in doing so we are bringing about a great relief in psychical work and that when we make serious use of words we are obliged to hold ourselves back with a certain effort from this comfortable procedure.[4]

A second type of innocent joke relies for its pleasure upon rediscovery of the familiar where the familiar was not expected. This comfortable advertence to the familiar saves us the psychic expenditure of grasping and assimilating the new.[5] In his discussion of innocent jokes Freud does not

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[1]Ibid., p. 118. [2]Ibid., p. 119. [3]Ibid., p. 149.

[4]Ibid., p. 119. [5]Ibid., p. 120.

offer examples of this type.

A third type of innocent joke relies upon absurdity and nonsense for its appeal. This offers us an opportunity to relax our critical faculties, to abandon for the moment the strict demands of logic and reason, and thus to save the psychic energy that logical thinking demands. ". . . this pleasure arises from an economy in psychical expenditure or a relief from the compulsion of criticism."[1]

Economy of ideation in the comic

Freud's concept of the comic can be summed up as amusement at the behavior, appearance, or traits of another person. We are amused when the behavior of another is exaggerated, inappropriate. On observing the behavior of others, normal or comic, we have a tendency to psychically duplicate their behavior, a process he refers to as "ideation mimetics." For example, a man watching a boxing match may go so far as to express this psychic empathy by overt physical action--clenched fists, occasional short punches at empty air. When we see the exaggeration and ineptitude of comic behavior we initiate a mental duplication of the movement, then, before we can complete this ideational mimetic, we realize how much more efficiently we could accomplish the same action. Thus our exaggerated psychic expenditure upon miming the other has been suspended in statu nascendi, to be

[1]Ibid., p. 127.

replaced by the lesser psychic expenditure of miming from memory our own more efficient behavior in the same circumstances. This saving of psychic energy produces pleasure, discharged in a laugh.

> In 'trying to understand,' [understand the comic behavior] therefore in apperceiving this movement, I make a certain expenditure, and in this portion of the mental process I behave exactly as though I were putting myself in the place of the person I am observing. But at the same moment, probably, I bear in mind the aim of this movement, and my earlier experience enables me to estimate the scale of expenditure required for reaching that aim. In doing so I disregard the person whom I am observing and behave as though I myself wanted to reach the aim of the movement. These two possibilities in my imagination amount to a comparison between the observed movement and my own. If the other person's movement is exaggerated and inexpedient, my increase expenditure in order to understand it is inhibited in statu nascendi, as it were in the act of being mobilized; it is declared superfluous and is free for use elsewhere or perhaps for discharge by laughter. This would be the way in which, other circumstances being favourable, pleasure in a comic movement is generated--an innervatory expenditure which has become an unusable surplus when a comparison is made with a movement of one's own.[1]

The analysis of a second type of comic situation--amusement at the stupidity of another person--is slightly more complicated. Here we perceive that the other has used an inadequate mental expenditure, less than we would have used in similar circumstances. Thus our comparison of his expenditure with our own does not result in an economy for ourselves, but the reverse. This, Freud points out, is confusing because it apparently contradicts the economy principle upon which he bases his entire theory of the humorous. However, the paradox is quickly resolved: increased

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[1]Ibid., p. 194.

intellectual expenditure means ultimately a saving in total psychic expenditure. It is in the final analysis a labor saving device. "A little use of the head saves much use of the feet."

> But this peculiarity [the apparent economy favoring the comic person], which at first sight confuses our judgment, vanishes when we bear in mind that a restriction of our muscular work and an increase of our intellectual work fit in with the course of our personal development towards a higher level of civilization. By raising our intellectual expenditure we can achieve the same result with a diminished expenditure in our movements.[1]

Later in his treatment of the comic, Freud suggests that the essence of the comic may lie in seeing the other in a state similar to childhood:

> One could then say: 'I laugh at a difference in expenditure between another person and myself, every time I rediscover the child in him.' Or, put more exactly, the complete comparison which leads to the comic would run: 'That is how he does it--I do it another way--he does it as I used to do it as a child.' . . .[2] What we have said would seem to suggest a certain probability for a translation of the comic feeling that might run: 'Those things are comic which are not proper for an adult.'[3]

However, he is not fully confidant of this "child-like" theory of the comic, for he says:

> I am unable to decide whether degradation to being a child is only a special case of comic degradation, or whether everything comic is based fundamentally on degradation to being a child.[4]

This "child-like" theory harmonizes well with his theory that the pleasure in the comic derives from an economy of ideation. The child does things inefficiently, and

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[1]Ibid., p. 195.

[2]Ibid., p. 224.

[3]Ibid., p. 227.

[4]Ibid.

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our nascent empathy (ideation) with his state is diverted aborning into our ideation of our own more efficient condition or behavior, thus resulting in a saving of ideation.

Economy of affect in humor

Humor, according to Freud, is amusement at oneself, occasioned by one's personal foibles, mistakes, or unfortunate predicament. Our usual reaction to these unpleasant stimuli is some negative emotion, perhaps embarrassment, anger, or sorrow. When the individual finds himself in an unpleasant situation, he finds emotion welling up inside him, but occasionally one is able to rise above the negative aspects of his situation and see it in a humorous perspective. This allays the rising negative emotions and effects an economy of affect. The energy thus saved is available for discharge in a laugh.

> The conditions for its [humor's] appearance are given if there is a situation in which, according to our usual habits, we should be tempted to release a distressing affect and if motives then operate upon us which suppress that affect in statu nascendi. In the cases that have just been mentioned the person who is the victim of the injury, pain, and so on, might obtain humorous pleasure, while the unconcerned person laughs from comic pleasure. The pleasure of humour, if this is so, comes about--we cannot say otherwise--at the cost of a release of affect that does not occur: it arises from an economy in the expenditure of affect.[1]

As examples of humor Freud offers two cases of what he calls "gallows humour." A felon is being led to the gallows on Monday, and exclaims "Well, this week's beginning

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[1]Ibid., p. 228.

nicely." Another felon, also being led to the gallows, asks for a scarf in order not to catch a cold.[1] This devil-may-care transcendence of one's misfortunes evokes Freud's admiration, which is noteworthy is such a dispassionate, clinical observer. Upon humor Freud bestows such unusual praise (for him) as "magnanimity,"[2] "grandeur,""fine and elevating,"[3] "a rare and precious gift,"[4] and "itself one of the highest psychic achievements, enjoys the particular favor of thinkers."[5] However, he admits that "the pleasure derived from humour is never so intense as that produced by the comic or by jokes and never finds a vent in hearty laughter."[6]

He also regards humor as a type of defence mechanism, an interesting point in the light of our tendency to regard defence mechanisms as psychologically inferior ways of coping. The purpose of the defence mechanism is to "prevent the generation of unpleasure from internal sources," and humor serves this purpose well. "Humor can be regarded as the highest of these defensive processes."[7]

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[1]Ibid., p. 230. At this piece of humor, Freud says, "we laugh heartily." We are more inclined to agree with his later dictum that this sort of humor "never finds vent in hearty laughter."

[2]Ibid., p. 229.

[3]Sigmund Freud, "Humour," The International Journal of Psychoanalysis 9 (January 1928):2.

[4]Ibid., p. 6. [5]Freud, Jokes, p. 228.

[6]Freud, "Humour," p. 5.

[7]Freud, Jokes, p. 233.

What enables an individual occasionally to transcend an otherwise unpleasant situation and derive humor from it? The answer to this question if not essential to Freud's "economy of affect" thesis, but he offers the tentative speculation:

> The exaltation of his ego, to which the humorous displacement bears witness, and of which the translation would no doubt be 'I am too big (too fine) to be distressed by these thing,' might well be derived from his comparing his present ego with his childish one. This view is to some extent supported by the part played by the infantile in neurotic processes of repression.[1]

In his article "Humour" in the International Journal of Psychoanalysis, written some twenty years after his book Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious, Freud offers further speculation on the psychic mechanism of humor. He asserts that humor represents the triumph of the ego's narcissism and the triumph of the pleasure principle, both of which refuse to be dominated by the harsh reality which is attempting to inflict humiliation or pain upon the individual.

> Obviously, what is fine about it [humor] is the triumph of narcissism, the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be compelled to suffer. . . . It signifies the triumph not only of the ego, but also of the pleasure principle, which is strong enough to assert itself here in the face of the adverse real circumstances.[2]

Having thus emphasized the ego's victory, Freud later makes what seems to be the contradictory assertion that the essence of humor lies in a deflation of the ego by the super-ego:

We obtain a dynamic explanation of the humourous attitude,

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[1]Ibid., p. 234.

[2]Freud, "Humour," p. 2.

> therefore, if we conclude that it consists in the subject's removing the accent from his own ego and transferring it to his super-ego. To the super-ego, thus inflated, the ego can appear tiny and all its interests trivial, and with this fresh distribution of energy it may be an easy matter for it to suppress the potential reactions of the ego.[1]

This paradox is resolved however if we consider that in speaking of the victorious ego he is referring to the ego in its broad sense, i.e., as "harboring within its inmost core the super-ego." Thus a triumphant super-ego would mean a triumphant ego. However, when he speaks of the deflated ego he is referring to that aspect of the ego which is distinct from (and, in a sense, in competition with) the super-ego. In this case a triumphant super-ego would mean a diminished ego. But the super-ego does "speak kindly words of comfort to the intimidated ego": "Look here! This is all that this seemingly dangerous world amounts to. Child's play--the very thing to jest about!"[2]

This of course harmonizes perfectly with his central thesis that the pleasure in humor derives from an economy of affect. By the wise admonitions of the super-ego, the ego is spared the emotions of pain, sorrow, and humiliation that it would otherwise undergo.

We will conclude our presentation of Freud's analysis of jokes, the comic and humor with his own terse summation, already cited previously:

> The pleasure in jokes has seemed to us to arise from an economy in expenditure upon inhibition, the pleasure in

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[1]Ibid., p. 4.

[2]Ibid., p. 5.

the comic from an economy in expenditure upon ideation (upon cathexis) and the pleasure in humour from an economy in expenditure upon feeling.[1]

Explanation of Freud's Categories of the Humorous by the "Self-Esteem" Theory

We shall acept Freud's common sense comment that true laughter is an expression of pleasure, and attempt to show how our pleasure in jokes, the comic, and in humor is derived from a sudden increase in self-esteem, on the part of the person amused. It is vital to bear in mind that self-esteem is "an awareness of our own possession of good."

Hostile Tendentious Jokes

Recall that Freud divides jokes into tendentious (purposeful) and innocent, and tendentious jokes he further divides into hostile and obscene. Freud's use of the term "hostile" for such jokes may seem a bit stark. I prefer the term "put-down," which seems broad enough to allow for "good nature ribbing" and "kidding" and "poking fun," all of which Freud may justifiably say have something of underlying hostility about them, but which in common estimation are not considered hostile. For example it seems excessive to label as hostile Churchill's toast to cocky Field Marshal Montgomery: "To Monty: in defeat, indomitable; in victory, insufferable." But undeniably this was a "dig" and belongs in the category of Freud's tendentious jokes. Somewhat more evident is the element of hostility in Churchill's description

[1]Freud, Jokes, p. 236.

of mousy Prime Minister Atlee as "a sheep in sheep's clothing." Or, "Atlee is a truly humble man, and no wonder, he has so much to be humble about."

How do such jokes give the hearer a boost in self-esteem? One of our most frequent measures of our own worth is by comparison with other persons. Thus, when we see another person "put down" we automatically, without conscious advertence, intuit this as an elevation of ourselves by comparison. We feel a momentary triumph over the subject who has been slashed with a "zinger." Slapstick comedy, with its pratfalls and pie-in-the-face, relies on the appeal of the visual presentation of the put-down. Of course, we do not always find the put-down amusing. To the extent that we identify with the victim, his loss of face is a loss of face for ourselves. We laugh when the grand dame in the movie takes a pratfall, but who would laugh at seeing his own mother fall?[1] Gladstone's put-down of Disraeli: "that man will die on the scaffold or of syphilis," evoked approving chuckles from Gladstone partisans, but a stony silence from the Disraeli party. Disraeli's witty rejoinder: "That depends, sir, upon whether I embrace your principles or your mistress," brought a roar of appreciation from the

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[1]Freud recognizes our disinclination to laugh at a put-down of someone with whom we identify:

> . . . an audience composed of my opponent's devoted friends would receive my most successful pieces of joking invective against him not as jokes but as invective, and would meet them with indignation and not with pleasure. (Jokes, p. 145.)

benches of Disraeli followers. Members of the Liberal Party, who identified politically with Gladstone, were not equally amused.

Another factor will keep us from finding the put-down amusing. If it works too severe a hardship on the victim, our sense of fellow feeling (identification) will keep us from enjoying the situation. Thus we may laugh at the pratfall, but our amusement is killed if we see that the victim has been injured.

The put-down of an institution or a value will amuse us to the extent that we feel some hostility, latent or overt, toward the object of the attack. Someone might object "But I am a Catholic and yet I laugh at jokes about the Catholic Church, with which I identify rather than feel hostility for. How do you explain that?" Actually, our feelings about an institution or value, (just as our feelings about a person), may be ambiguous. About some aspects of the subject we approve, about other aspects we disapprove and feel some hostility. The liberal Catholic will laugh at a joke which ridicules certain authoritarian or pietistic aspects of the Catholic Church, while the traditionalist Catholic might laugh at a joke at the expense of the recent trends within the Church.

This put-down of the value with which we disagree represents a confirmation of the validity of our own judgment and thus boosts our self-esteem.

At this point let us stress again that the psychic

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process here is not a consciously reflective one. We certainly do not ratiocinate "the speaker dislikes what I dislike, ergo my judgment is confirmed, ergo this is added testimony making me aware that I am possessed of a good, namely, good judgment." Rather, the psychic process in humor is automatic and almost instantaneous. Often we can not even explain why the joke struck us as funny. Appreciation of humor does require a rational agent--someone capable of getting the point--but an essential element is the suddenness of the appreciation; the "sudden burst of self-glory" that Hobbes speaks about. Conscious explication of the "point" tends to kill the humor. For this reason we have defined humor not as "pleasure due to an increase in self-esteem" but as "pleasure due to a sudden increase in self-esteem."

However, there seems to be another element in the successful put-down, other than our own elevation by comparison with the subject of the put-down. That further element is the ingenuity (wit, technique, subtlety) with which the put-down is accomplished. For instance if Churchill had said "Atlee is a very colorless person" his remark would not have had the humorous quality of "Atlee is a sheep in sheep's clothing," although the same put-down is there, and is equally "sudden." What is the further element? The advocates of the incongruity theory of humor could offer that the phrase "sheep in sheep's clothing" is incongruous and therefore amusing--incongruous because our mental set is for

the phrase "a wolf in sheep's clothing." This is true, but why should this incongruity be pleasing to us? We suggest that our perception of the incongruity is a tribute to our mental acuity, albeit a modest one, making us suddenly advert to that excellence we possess. "I get it!" the unsophisticated hearer of a joke sometimes shouts in triumph. "I get it!"--I am possessed of the wit and perception to see the point.

Thus, the well-executed "aggressive tendentious joke" has a double effect in giving us a self-esteem boost: the elevation of self in comparison with the person, institution or value being put down, and secondly, the tribute to our sharpness in getting the point.

Obscene Tendentious Jokes

What is the source of a self-esteem boost in the obscene tendentious joke? The "I get the point" tribute to our mental acuity is one ego-gratifying factor, if the joke has some claim to be clever as well as obscene. And here, in addition, getting the point is a small tribute to our sophistication and worldliness, values which are highly prized excellences in most circles. Further, the off-color joke or double entendre is by its very nature a put-down of a standard of values which many consider to be Puritanical and oppressive. By flouting that strict code the teller has given the hearer temporary relief from a vague, unvoiced, slightly self-esteem-inhibiting feeling that his prurient interests are not really respectable. "Why, Frank Sinatra

is as horny as I am," jubilantly exclaimed Eric Beirne, author of The Games People Play, on hearing the blue material in Sinatra's act at Caesar's Palace. (The mind boggles at why Beirne should have found this surprising.)

The person who is truly not amused by the off-color joke(aside from those not sophisticated enough to get the point) is a person who identifies with the morality being gently--or outrageously--flouted. Like all of us (the gentle reader excepted) he has a natural (but unwelcome in his case) interest in prurient matters but has strong convictions against entertaining such thoughts. A case in point is Jimmy Carter's attitude, voiced in a Playboy interview, about the adulterous thoughts that come to him occasionally.

The obscene joke, Freud tells us, offers us a relief from repression. The repression is due to our awareness that society, or some segments of society, regard as immoral the forbidden sexual urges we all experience. Society, and in many cases, our own inner censor, is telling us "you are bad for entertaining such thoughts." But the obscene joke flouts those interior and exterior censors; it defies their authority and says in effect "it doesn't make you one of the bad guys to have these thoughts, actually you are one of the liberated good guys." A gratifying boost to our self-esteem.

The obscene joke seems to qualify also as a hostile joke, attacking the "purity in thought and speech" standards of religion and "polite society."

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Innocent Jokes

The innocent jokes, in Freud's classification, are those in which we take pleasure in technique alone, rather than in obscenity or attack. The innocent joke is usually also innocent of much laugh-provoking power. As Dr. Freud points out, the hostile or obscene jokes are both more frequent and more amusing. His first category of innocent jokes is the "play upon words." From the one example he gives us, this category seems equivalent to that "lowest of all forms of humor," the pun. Why does the good pun give us pleasure? Actually, this type of "joke" gives much more pleasure to the maker than to the hearer. His pun is seen by himself as evicence of his cleverness. The pun-maker feels a small glow of pride, fed by the groans of his hearers. Occasionally a pun is also amusing to the hearers. Their pleasure may derive from a feeling of their sharpness in getting the point, or the pun may have a meaning which places it in the category of obscene or hostile jokes.

Freud's second category of innocent jokes depends upon "the fact that in each of them something familiar is rediscovered, where we might instead have expected something new."[1] He adds that "it seems to be generally agreed that the rediscovery of what is familiar, 'recognition,' is pleasurable." This pleasure he attributes to an economy of psychic expenditure--we are psychically geared up to cope with

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[1] Ibid., p. 120.

something new, when instead the familiar thing (sound, sight, person) appears. We can cope more easily with the familiar, and thus we save psychic energy. This explanation fits well with the self-esteem theory. Our confrontation with something new poses possible threats to our self-image--we may not respond as well to the new as we would like, we may not cope with the aplomb, savoire faire and joi de vivre that we cherish in our self-image, we may be put in a somewhat unfavorable light. When, instead of the new, the familiar appears, we know instantly how to adapt, and the tiny unvoiced threats of the new disappear. Our self-image is suddenly liberated from that particular threat.[1] On the positive side, the emergence of the familiar enables us to react smoothly and effectively and provides added testimony to our possession of those prized excellences, psychic competancy and efficiency. Probably the prototype of this sort of humor is the gurgling joy that infants take in "peek-a-boo" games. "Who is this strange face emerging from behind those hands? Why it is my familiar loving mama!" The same explanation might be offered for the amusement infants take in seeing mother or father "make faces." For an instant the grimace poses the threat of something or someone new, but quickly the child realizes that this is no threat, it is simply familiar, loving mama or daddy or whoever. On an adult level, when we are present at a party

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[1]But how does this jibe with the frequent tendency to look forward to the new, and take pleasure in it when it arrives? This pleasurable anticipation occurs when we have reason to expect that the new will provide an added boost in

where we know no one, then suddenly in the crowd we run into a familiar friend, it usually produces a chuckle of pleasure.

After discussing a more complicated view of why recognition of the familiar is pleasurable, Freud concludes "I see no reason to depart from the simpler view that recognition is pleasurable in itself, i.e., through relieving psychic expenditure . . . ."[1] Our view, somewhat similar, can be stated: recognition of the familiar is pleasurable in those cases where it relieves psychic threat, i.e., possible threat to our self-image, or where it provides psychic comfort, i.e., a boost for our self-image.

Freud's third category of innocent jokes he terms "pleasure in nonsense." This type of humor seems to have an especial appeal for children and teen-agers. In this humor category are the "grape" jokes current in the 60's (50's?). "What is the best grape? Answer: Alexander the Grape." Or, "what is purple, weighs 300 pounds, and has no legs? Give up? A 300 pound grape!" And so the possibilities went, ad nauseum. Hardly classic. Hardly vintage humor, if you will pardon a pun. But younger people, when in a silly mood, found them funny. Nonsense humor was one

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self-esteem (i.e., friendship with a new person, opportunities in a new situation, added knowledge, more "fun." Fun, we suggest, might be defined as "effort accompanied by an immediate increase in self-esteem," whereas work might be defined as "effort followed at some later time by an increase in self-esteem, hopefully." Of course, work can sometimes also be fun.)

[1]Ibid., p. 122.

of the staples of the Marx Brothers movies. Groucho, waving his foot-long cigar, proclaims "On my last safari in Africa I shot an elephant in my pajamas. What he was doing in my pajamas I'll never know." Here, as it seems in most nonsense humor, the humorous element lies in incongruity--the presentation of a ludicrous image, or as some humor analysts prefer to phrase it, the juxtaposition of elements which do not belong together, in this case, an elephant in pajamas. Why did audiences chuckle at this? The pleasurable self-esteem boost may have been partly due to the perception of an incongruity, which offers a small tribute to our acuity, and makes us suddenly, if implicitly, aware of this excellence we possess. A second possibility, not mutually exclusive with the first, is that this piece of nonsense flouts the canons of common sense and logic, laws which are so necessary in our lives but which do have a restrictive and restraining aspect. When these laws of reason or custom are flouted, we can, if our mood be right, feel a sense of inner liberation. This sudden awareness of a prized excellence, inner freedom, is, by tautology, a sudden boost in self-esteem.

Freud recognizes this urge to be free from the restrictions of logic and reason as an appeal that the absurd has for our sense of humor:

> But there is far more potency in the restrictions which must establish themselves in the course of a child's education in logical thinking and in distinguishing between what is true and false in reality; and for this reason the rebellion against the compulsion of logic and

> reality is deep-going and long-lasting. . . .
>
> Nor, later on, does the University student cease these demonstrations against the compulsion of logic and reality, the dominance of which, however, he feels growing ever more intolerant and unrestricted. . . .
>
> If we look back once more at the three separate groups of joke-techniques [of innocent jokes], we see that the first and third of these groups--the replacement of thing-associations by word-associations and the use of absurdity--can be brought together as re-establishing old liberties and getting rid of the burden of intellectual upbringing; they are psychical reliefs, . . .[1]

Is the humor element in the absurd due principally to this cavalier and liberating treatment of logic and reason, as Freud comments, or is it due principally to perceived incongruity? Actually, it seems that these two are one and the same: incongruity is a juxtaposition of elements that do not belong together, and this is a flouting of the laws of common sense and logic. However, there remain two distinct possible sources for a self-esteem boost--from a tribute to our mental acuity in perceiving the incongruity, and secondly, and perhaps principally, from the inner temporary liberation from demanding mental taskmasters, reality and logic.

The humorous appeal of nonsense and absurdity can be considered from still another angle, that is, as a flouting of social conventions. For example, instead of the conventional parting words "have a good day," a friend says "have a good." This evokes a smile. The stick man at a Vegas crap table passes the dice to the next person, a woman, and announces "the next man is a lady." This occasionally relaxes the grim faces of one or two patrons.

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[1]Ibid., p. 126.

Why do these examples of nonsense have some amusement value? They are a small flouting of convention, a microcosmic violation of social propriety. As such they give us a small breath of freedom of spirit. Social conventions and proprieties, as well as all rules and regulations, carry an implicit threat. They dictate to us. They suavely intone their implacable will "you must behave thus, under pain of humiliation." And I can't fight city hall. But suddenly someone buoyantly thumbs his nose at city hall and Emily Post and Miss Fletcher, my fourth grade English teacher, and gets away with it. Suddenly life is a little less gray and stale. The niggling menace of the "chicken shit" rule is dissipated for the moment, and I am a freer, better man. My spirit expands, I am elevated to a broader perspective.

The Comic

Let us recall that Freud uses the term "the comic" to refer to the appearance, behavior or speech of other persons which strikes us as ludicrious. Freud's insights regarding the comic harmonize well with the self-esteem theory. He recognizes that in cases where we laugh at another's clumsiness or stupidity we are feeling a pleasurable sense of superiority to that person. Superior at least in that aspect at that particular time.

> Thus a uniform explanation is provided of the fact that a person appears comic to us if, in comparison with ourselves, he makes too great an expenditure upon his bodily functions and too little upon his mental ones; and it can not be denied that in both these cases our

> laughter expresses a pleasurable sense of the superiority which we feel in relation to him.[1]

Further, Freud suggests that the essence of the comic lies in the "degradation" of the other to the level of a child. If this be true, the observer derives a feeling of superiority by comparison.

> . . . 'I laugh at a difference in expenditure between another person and myself, every time I rediscover the child in him.' Or, put more exactly, the complete comparison which leads to the comic would run: 'That is how he does it--I do it another way--he does it as I used to do it as a child.'[2]

However, he is not fully decided on this point, for he says:

> I am unable to decide whether degradation to being a child is only a special case of comic degradation, or whether everything comic is based fundamentally on degradation to being a child.[3]

The comic degradation of an adult is amusing to a child because it gives him relief from the "oppressive superiority" of the adult, i.e., it enables the child's sense of self-esteem to be suddenly buoyed up.

> There is little that gives children greater pleasure than when a grown-up lets himself down to their level, renounces his oppressive superiority and plays with them as an equal. This relief, which gives the child pure pleasure, becomes in adults, in the form of degradation, a means of making things comic and a source of comic pleasure.[4]

Freud is quite willing to explicitly admit the self-esteem motive in the case of a child's laughter at the comic incident, but refuses to attribute the same motive to adult

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[1]Ibid., p. 195.

[2]Ibid., p. 224.

[3]Ibid., p. 227.

[4]Ibid.

laughter at the same incident. Curiously, he can clearly see why the child finds it amusing when someone "slips and falls" but as to why the adult also may find it amusing "we do not know why."

> It is probably right to say that children laugh from pure pleasure in a variety of circumstances that we feel as 'comic' and cannot find the motive for, whereas a child's motives are clear and can be stated. For instance, if someone slips in the street and falls down we laugh because the impression--we do not know why--is comic. A child laughs in the same case from a feeling of superiority or from Schadenfreude: 'You've fallen down, I haven't.'[1]

The answer to his "we do not know why" he could have found by applying a quote from Bergson which he cited earlier:

> [1]['Perhaps we should even carry simplification further still, go back to our oldest memories, and trace in the games that amused the child the first sketch of the combinations which make the grown man laugh. . . . Above all, we too often fail to recognize how much of childishness, so to speak, there still is in most of our joyful emotions.'][2]

Why is Freud so quick to reject the idea that the adult laughs at comic incidents from the same motives that spark the child's laughter? Could it be that an unrecognized defence mechanism is operating in the great psychiatrist's psyche: unconsciously he draws back from the self-inflicted lese majeste of admitting that a world-famed intellectual could stoop to the grubby gambit of adding to his stock of self-esteem by feeling superior to some poor wretch who has slipped on a banana peel.

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[1]Ibid., p. 224. [2]Ibid., p. 223.

In support of his rejection of the idea that a sense of superiority lies at the root of adult laughter Freud offers the observation that in some cases of the comic there is not a comparison with the comic person. Rather, the necessary comparison is made between our own "mimetic ideation" of his behavior and our memory of our own more efficient behavior.

> The origin of comic pleasure which has been discussed here--its derivation from a comparison of another person with ourself, from the difference between our own psychical expenditure and the other person's as estimated by empathy--is probably the most important genetically. It is certain, however, that it has not remained the only one. We have learnt at one time or other to disregard this comparison between the other person and ourself and to derive the pleasurable difference from the one side only, whether from the empathy or from the processes in ourself--which proves that the feeling of superiority bears no essential relation to comic pleasure.[1]

But how does one determine whether he is making a comparison between, on the one hand, his own efficient behavior, and on the other hand, either the clumsy behavior of the other or his own inner process of miming that clumsy behavior? There seems to be no conclusive criterion, interior or exterior, for ruling out the possibility that we are indeed comparing self with the other. Therefore Freud's opting for the comparison between two processes in the observer does not seem a forceful reason for rejecting comparison with the other and thus the motive of superiority.[2]

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[1]Ibid., p. 196.

[2]We should make it clear here that an increase in self-esteem, while it may arise from a feeling of

Freud offers another reason for rejecting the superiority explanation of pleasure in the comic. He cites the case of a person engaged in deep intellectual activity who is "suddenly interrupted by a pain or excretory need." Let us picture someone in the attitude of "The Thinker," engaged in the most profound contemplation, when suddenly he breaks wind. Our amusement in a case like this, Freud says, is not due to any feeling of superiority, for "we know that in the same circumstances we could not have behaved otherwise."[1] Thus, Freud says, the comic one is inferior not to us, but to his earlier self. This writer suggests that no matter how involuntary the mishap which has surprised the other may be, we indeed feel a small sense of superiority because, de facto, this embarrassing thing has happened to him and not to us, here and now. His mishap is another form of the put-down, administered not by deliberate human agency but by nature.

A third argument is offered by Freud to refute the idea that our pleasure in the comic depends upon a feeling of superiority. He cites tha case of a person pretending to be clumsy or stupid, thus eliciting a laugh from the onlookers even though they realize he is pretending and thus they have

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superiority to another, may also arise from other sources. For instance, it can come from a feeling of superiority over our <u>own</u> past performance. Or it can come from merely an awareness of our own possession of good, regardless of comparisons, e.g., the sheer joy in living one feels running along a sunny beach, exulting in the goods of health, agility, freedom, and life itself.

[1]Ibid., p. 197.

no basis for feeling superior.[1] Indeed they may even be envious of his comedic talent. In answer to this argument I suggest that on occasion we are pleased to respond to the world of make-believe with reactions appropriate to real-life situations. We are pleased to step aside from our critical faculties and emote with the movie hero and heroine and rejoice over the downfall of the villian even though we realize that this is "just pretend." What prevents us then from responding with a feeling of superiority (automatic and subconscious, as usual in our amused reactions) to the clumsy character being simulated by our friend at the party. In addition, our amusement at the clown of the party may have a small element of self-congratulation at our sophistication in realizing that he is just pretending.

In summation, in several citations Freud has recognized the self-esteem motive behind the pleasure we take in the comic: "a child laughs in the same case from a feeling of superiority,"[2] "it cannot be denied that in both these cases our laughter expresses a pleasurable sense of the superiority we feel in relation to him,"[3] and his suggestion that the essence of the comic may be the degradation of the other to the level of a child. His objections against extending the superiority motive to all of the comic we have answered above. Whereas the implicit feeling of superiority need

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[1]Ibid., p. 199. [2]Ibid., p. 224. [3]Ibid., p. 195.

not be the motive behind all genuine laughter, inasmuch as we have shown previously that some laughter may arise from a sense of our own excellence quite apart from any comparison with others, nevertheless when we are laughing at the ludicrous appearance, speech or behavior of another, i.e., in the case of the comic, our laughter does seem to arise from a pleasurable feeling of superiority.

Humor

Humor, as Freud uses the term, is amusement at oneself in circumstances that customarily provoke annoyance, sorrow or anger, circumstances such as one's own mistakes, foibles, or unfortunate situation. Simply put, humor is laughing at oneself. Here we mean genuine laughter, not the "see what a good sport I am, I can laugh at myself" laughter that we sometimes summon up to cover our embarrassment in the presence of onlookers when "the joke is on us." Humor is a wry amusement which the individual feels even though no one else is present, and which can manifest itself in an ironic smile or even a gentle laugh. The smile or laugh express a genuine pleasure, even though it is struggling for survival under the pressure of other emotions.

At first glance the existence of such amusement seems contrary to the self-esteem theory. How can a person derive a sudden increment of self-esteem from his own mistakes or mishaps? As a concrete example, an incident I witnessed recently in a supermarket will serve nicely. A woman had placed a wicker basket on the floor and was filling it with

jars of peanut butter and jelly. When she tried to life it she burst out laughing. "I can't lift it," she said to no one in particular. When I asked her why this should strike her as funny, she explained "Here I go to all this trouble to make it easier to carry my jars, and then I can't lift it. I mean, if you saw somebody do this in the movies you would laugh. It's like building a boat in your basement and then you can't get it out. There is nobody I laugh at more than myself. I'm always doing these dumb things. I told my husband, if I ever find someone with the same crazy sense of humor I have, I'll probably fall in love with him and leave you. These dumb things I do, I mean, if you just look at it, and don't let it get away from you, it's funny. Unless of course it is something that is a tragedy."

Her explanation offers several insights. The incongruity theorists can proclaim: "See, the incongruity between her planned labor-saving device and the fact that she could not lift it, this is the humorous element." And there does seem to be considerable truth in the incongruity theory--so many of the things at which we laugh can be thus explained. But the incongruity theory does not go deep enough, it does not explain why some incongruities are depressing rather than amusing. Tragedy itself, undeserved disaster, is by very definition an incongruity.

In her explanation we see the element of objectivity, being able to step asider from oneself and look at self with the eyes of an observer. "If you saw someone do this in the

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movies, you would laugh." And, "if you just look at it, and don't let it get away from you, it is funny." As Freud points out, the detached observer, seeing such an amusing incident, would see it as a case of the comic rather than what he strictly calls humor, and would laugh at the person involved. This ability to look at oneself objectively enables us to see the comical aspect of our behavior. But still, how does individual get a self-esteem increment from this? Here we see the "real me" getting an ego boost at the expense of the "superficial me." We view ourselves in different aspects, and sometimes actually take a sort of pride in some of our defects, as setting off our good points all the more clearly by contrast. The successful professor may confess "when it comes to fixing things around the house, I am a complete idiot," and you notice the humor in his tone of voice, a certain complacency or even gratification in his mechanical ineptitude. In effect, he is saying "my excellence in my profession gives me the ego strength and security to make light of my lesser defects." This ability to rise above our foibles, small defects or mishaps, is evidence of our possession of greater excellences which give us a vantage point to look with amused condescension on the more trivial aspects of our personality or situation. The woman in the supermarket, on finding she could not lift her basket of peanut butter and jelly, probably felt an instant of disgruntlement, followed by an automatic and almost instantaneous reaction that, if it were spelled out, would amount

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to: "Wait a minute! Should I be put down by this trifling incident, when I have so much going for me in the total picture. A superior person like myself, to be emotionally dominated by not being able to pick up a basket. Ridiculous!" The challenge of the annoying incident has forced her to refer, even unconsciously, to her larger excellence. As Freud puts it, humor is the exaltation of the ego:

> The exaltation of his ego, to which the humourous displacement bears witness, and of which the translations would no doubt be 'I am too big (too fine) to be distressed by these things' . . .[1]

This exaltation of the ego is reinforced by the accompanying awareness that in addition to our other possessed excellences which give us the emotional security to be able to rise above our present difficulty, we have the most prized type of humor, the ability to laugh at ourselves. For these things are not the same: some people do have the excellences that should enable them to rise above petty mishaps, but actually the person lets himself be dominated by the petty; and other persons may rise above the petty, but philosophically rather than humorously. It gives our self-esteem an added increment to have this additional excellence, the "highest psychic achievement" as Freud calls it, this ability to laugh at oneself. As the woman in the supermarket remarked, with a pardonable glow of self-congratulation, "there is nothing I laugh at more than myself."

In short, when we find ourselves on the verge of being miffed by a small lack of excellence in our person or situation,

this gives us the occasion to put the case into perspective by referring (without explicitly spelling it out, of course) to our larger excellences. This sudden advertence to our excellence, is, by definition, a sudden increment of self-esteem.[1] This is bolstered by another increment in self-esteem, resulting from this added evidence of our good sense of humor. The resulting pleasure may be expressed in laughter or a smile, or in those touched by Weltschmerz, at least by a wry inner smile.

Freud's insights into humor as "the exaltation of the ego" and "the ego's victorious assertion of its onw invulnerability"[2] are equivalent ways of saying that humor is a triumph of self-esteem.

Summation

Freud divides humorous material into jokes (hostile, obscene or innocent), the comic, and humor, proper. In each of these cases our pleasure can be explained by a sudden "pointing up" of our excellence. The humorous situation is an occasion for the observer to become suddenly aware, albeit implicitly, of his own excellence.

The hostile joke is a put-down of a person, value or institution, which elevates the hearer by comparison. The

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[1]The increment of self-esteem does not necessarily mean that we have acquired additional excellences, but rather that we have adverted to those that we have already.

[2]Freud, "Humour," p. 2.

obscene joke is a put-down of a strict moral code, and secondly, offers a tribute to our worldliness and sophistication in getting the point. Innocent jokes may be puns, or rediscovery of the familiar, or nonsense. In the first case, there is a small tribute to our mental acuity in perceiving the play upon words. In the second case, the emergence of the familiar where the unfamiliar was expected, frees our self-esteem from the small threat of not coping adequately with the unfamiliar. In the case of nonsense, we gain a self-esteem buoying inner freedom by flaunting the rules of logic and reason.

The comic is a put-down of another, yielding a sense of comparative superiority for the observer. Humor proper--laughing at oneself--results when the challenge of a small lack of excellence causes us to advert to our greater excellences which dwarf this present annoyance.

Comparison With Other Theories

Theories of humor are so numerous as to preclude a comparison with all of them. Fortunately, the many theories can be grouped into a few categories. Superiority theories and incongruity theories predominate, and Monro in his excellent book Argument of Laughter proposes three additional types: relief from restraint, ambivalence, and his own "inappropriateness" theory. We will consider these five theories, and also the "liberation" theory recently proposed by Mindess, to see whether the self-esteem theory can offer a more basic explanation for the essential element in each of the other

theories.

Superiority Theories

The best-known of the superiority theories is Hobbes' "sudden glory" explanation for laughter. In a brief discussion Hobbes points out that men laugh at "their own actions performed never so little beyond their expectations," at "the infirmities of others," at jests, in which the wit consists in "the elegant discovering and conveying to our minds some absurdity or another," and at "absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons." He sums up his famous theory succinctly:

> I may conclude therefore, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly.[1]

The similarity of this to our own "sudden self-esteem" theory is evident. The sudden glory spoken of by Hobbes is a sudden self-glory, i.e., self-esteem. His theory has been referred to by opponents as the "degradation" theory, with the expressed or implicit condemnation that it necessarily requires degradation of the person being laughed at. Such commentators tend to overlook his qualifier "or with our own formerly," which allows for laughter at oneself. And laughing at the foibles of others need not be the malign thing that some opponents of Hobbes conceive it to be; we can indulge in a loving, affectionate laughter at some small

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[1]Thomas Hobbes, The Elements of Law (Cambridge, Engl.: Cambridge University Press, 1928), p. 31.

idiocyncrasy of a good friend. What we call "good-natured joshing" falls into this category. Hobbes does not explain how the "elegant discovering and conveying to our minds some absurdity or another" gives us a conception of some eminency in ourselves, no doubt feeling that it is obvious that such a discovery makes us aware of our own mental acuity.

The essence of Hobbes' theory is that laughter is due to a "sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves." There may seem to be little difference between this and our own theory that laughter is due to a "sudden awareness of a good possessed by self." However, one difference is that the word "eminency" is taken by some commentators to necessarily implie comparison with other persons. This has led to his theory being labeled the "superiority" or "degradation" theory, whereas actually a comparison with others is only one of the possible sources of self-esteem mentioned in his theory. The phrasing of our present theory, "sudden awareness of good possessed by self," avoids the implication of a necessary comparison with the infirmities of others.

Truly an exponent of the superiority theory is Hugues Felicite Robert de Lamennais, quoted in Max Eastman's Sense of Humor:

> "Whatever be the cause which provokes laughter," he says, "go to the bottom of it, and you will find it constantly accompanied, whether one avows it or not, with a secret satisfaction of amour-propre, of I know not what malign pleasure. Whoever laughs at another believes himself at that moment superior to him in the aspect in which he views him, and which excites his laughter, and the laugh is everywhere the expression of the contentment which this

real or imaginary superiority inspires."[1]

His use of the word "malign" is unfortunate, and, it seems to me, quite unnecessary for his superiority theory. A feeling of superiority need not be malign; our good-natured joshing a friend about some small inconsistency or mistake is indeed an expression of a small and temporary superiority over him in this limited matter, but it seems extreme to call this malign. This dark view of the pleasure behind laughter is mitigated by de Lamennais' realization that we can find humorous pleasure in our own weaknesses. In his Esquisse d'une Philosophie, again quoted by Eastman, he says:

> "The self," he says, "which discovers the ridiculous in one of the inferior regions of its being, separates itself from that at which it laughs, distinguishes itself from it, and rejoices inwardly at a sagacity which elevates it in its own esteem. Thus pride feeds even upon the sight of certain weaknesses concealed in the folds of the heart, and which it has been able to discover. I am not the dupe of myself--so we say--and we admire ourselves for that."[2]

The essential difference between de Lamennais' theory and my own is that he implies that the pleasure behind laughter is necessarily of an unworthy sort.

A. M. Ludovici (The Secret of Laughter, 1932) is usually listed among the superiority theorists, although he makes the qualification that the sudden burst of self-esteem which underlies all laughter need not spring from a

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[1]Max Eastman, The Sense of Humor (New York: Schuster and Schuster, 1922), p. 147.

[2]Ibid., p. 140.

feeling of superiority to others. He says:

> Laughter is self-glory. So we can now understand why a person can laugh apparently at nothing . . . unprovoked by any external stimulus. . . . We can now also understand all those laughs in which there is definite outside provocation; for, although Hobbes quite unnecessarily limits the series of these external stimuli, those externally provoked laughs not mentioned by him are . . . implicit in his two words self-glory.[1]

Monro comments on Ludovici's view: "it is a sudden access of self-esteem that causes us to burst into laughter: not a steady sense of superiority."[2]

Notable among superiority theorists are Henri Bergson (Laughter, 1914): "In laughter we always find an unavowed intention to humiliate, and consequently to correct our neighbor, if not in his will, at least in his deed. . . ."[3]; Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: laughter is in general "little more than an expression of self-satisfied shrewdness; a sign that they have sufficient wit to recognize such a fact and are aware of the fact."[4]; and Charles Darwin: "something incongruous or unaccountable, exciting surprise and in some sense of superiority in the laugher, who must be in a happy frame of mind, seems to be the commonest cause."[5]

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[1]D. H. Monro, Argument of Laughter (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1951), p. 84.

[2]Ibid.

[3]Eastman, Sense of Humor, p. 148.

[4]Ralph Piddington, The Psychology of Laughter (London: Figurehead, 1933), p. 169.

[5]Charles Darwin, The Expression of the Emotions in Men and Animals (London: popular edition, 1904), p. 205.

In summation, our "sudden self-esteem" theory embraces the superiority theories,[1] inasmuch as superiority to others in some aspect is one way of increasing our self-esteem. Our theory is broader still, allowing for increased self-esteem through awareness of good possessed, independent of any comparison with others or with oneself previously. Further, we wish to disassociate ourselves from the view, implied by some superiority theorists, that this sudden self-esteem is necessarily an unworthy reaction.

Can the superiority theorists use the same argument in reverse: the superiority theory embraces the self-esteem theory and is more basic, inasmuch as self-esteem is one way of giving ourselves a feeling of superiority to others.

The question then is, do we make a comparison of self with the other (including self in a previous condition) as a means of reassuring ourselves that we are truly possessed of good, or do we want to possess good in order to feel superior to the other?

The answer seems to lie in the fact that every feeling of superiority necessarily heightens our awareness of good

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[1] It is difficult to find any essential difference between our self-esteem theory and Hobbes' sudden glory theory, properly understood. However, there is considerable difference between our theory and that of Hobbes as he is commonly interpreted by his critics. They read his theory as necessarily involving the laugher's feeling of superiority to another person (thus ignoring two of the qualifying phrases that Hobbes uses), and further, they usually view the feeling of superiority as something malign.

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possessed by self, in that comparison with the other is one standard by which we become aware of our own degree of possession of good. However, not every awareness of good possessed necessarily contributes to a feeling of superiority. For instance, a person alone watching a desert sunset may exult in the beauty of the sight and in his harmony with nature (goods possessed) without any feeling of superiority to other persons. Therefore the awareness of good possessed seems to be a more basic and ultimate concept than is superiority.

Put in another way, it seems that self-esteem can have an existence independent of a feeling of superiority. For example, if I live faithfully according to my code of morality I have a deep sense of self-worth, regardless of what others are doing. Far from wanting to exceed others in that endeavor, I would be deeply gratified to see them living up to that code of morality with equal faithfulness. In this case I have an objective standard (the code of morality) for measuring my own possession of good, and do not need the standard of comparison with others.

But a feeling of superiority has no existence apart from an awareness (true or illusory) of good possessed. Rather, every feeling of superiority can only be based upon such an awareness.

We can arrive in another way at the conclusion that self-esteem is more basic than is a feeling of superiority by considering the definitions of the two concepts.

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Self-esteem is an awareness (true or illusory) of good possessed by self. A feeling of superiority is an awareness (true or illusory) of more good possessed by self than is possessed by the other with whom comparison is being made. Self-esteem is thus a more basic and ultimate concept than is superiority.

Incongruity Theories

The fragmentary remarks of Plato and Aristotle on humor can be considered as forerunners of both the superiority and the incongruity theories. Plato says that laughter is a pleasure, and to laugh at the conceit of our friends is to rejoice in their misfortunes, and therefore implies malice.[1] The superiority element here is obvious, and the incongruity element lies in the contrast between the friend's inflated opinion of himself and what we perceive as the reality of his character. Aristotle states: "The ludicrous is merely a subdivision of the ugly. It may be defined as a defect or ugliness which is not painful or destructive."[2] A defect represents an incongruity between the actual and the ideal. And its appealing element in the ludicrous can be considered to be the fact that it either makes us aware of our own lack of that defect, or if we are conscious of having that defect, may make us feel that our own plight is not so bad after all.

However, Monro tells us that Kant is generally regarded as the father of incongruity theories of humor, deriving from

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[1]Plato Philebus 49.

[2]Aristotle Poetics 5.

his remark that "laughter is a sudden transformation of a strained expectation into nothing."[1] Kant illustrates this with the fact that hearing of a man whose hair turned white overnight as the result of a fright would not amuse us, but we are amused to hear that a man suffered such a fright that his wig turned white. Our initial expectation of hearing of a tragic result has dissolved into nothingness. However, Kant does not tell us why laughter should follow upon a strained expectation being transformed into nothing. Actually, if our strained expectation of hearing good news comes to nothing, we are customarily not amused. The race track bettor's strained expectation of winning fifty dollars on the even-money favorite comes to nothing when his horse is scratched, but the bettor is hardly amused.

Schopenhauer and Max Eastman are two notable exponents of the incongruity theory of humor. Schopenhauer says that the source of humor is always the "unexpected subsumption of an object under a concept which in other respects is different from it."[2] As an example he gives the epitaph on the tombstone of a doctor:

> Here he lies like a hero, and those he has slain around him.

The incongruity of this comic epitaph lies in the unexpected subsumption of "doctor" under the concept of a battle-

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[1]Immanuel Kant, Kant's Critique of Judgment, trans. J. H. Bernard, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 19), P. 223.

[2]Monro, Argument of Laughter, p. 148.

field hero, lying dead in the midst of the many enemy soldiers he has slain. But of this and the other examples cited by by Schopenhauer, Monro observes astutely that in every case someone is being ridiculed, suggesting that the humorous appeal may be not in incongruity as such, but in the unexpected put-down of someone. This would offer support to the idea that the incongruity theory is ultimately reducible to the superiority theory.

Schopenhauer states that the pleasure in humor comes from a triumph of sense perception over reason. In an incongruity there is a conflict between what we expected to perceive and what we actually perceive by our senses. The latter are "always unquestionably right."

> This victory of knowledge of perception over thought gives us pleasure. For perception is the original kind of knowledge inseparable from animal nature, in which everything that gives direct satisfaction to the will presents itself. It is the medium of the present, of enjoyment and gaiety; and moreover, it is attended with no exertion. With thinking the opposite is the case; it is the second power of knowledge, the exercise of which always demands some, and often considerable, exertion. . . . It must therefore be diverting to us to see this strict, untiring, troublesome governess, the reason, for once convinced of insufficiency.[1]

Here the pleasure in humor once more resolves itself into a put-down, this time a put-down of our own supposedly higher faculty of reason. And of course every put-down means a corresponding triumph, i.e., superiority, in this case a triumph of our own sense faculties.

Schopenhauer refers to reason as a "strict, untiring, troublesome governess." Reason also plays the role of a

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[1]Ibid., p. 151.

taskmaster, policeman and preacher in our lives, commanding us, threatening us with consequences and accusing us of violations of its laws. Is it any wonder that men occasionally rejoice to see such a threat to their self-esteem dethroned, put down. Witness the popularity of drugs that help a person to "blow his mind" and temporarily dethrone troublesome reason.

Max Eastman

In his book Enjoyment of Laughter Eastman develops his theory of humor as "unpleasantness given and received in fun." In fuller form:

> It might be summed up, in this closer view, as follows: There are two kinds of unpleasantnesses: one is failing to get what you want; the other is getting what you don't want. There are, accordingly, two kinds of humor: taking a frustrated (thought or) action playfully, and taking an unpleasant presentation playfully.[1]

He terms the first type "practical humor" and the second "perceptual humor" and says that both "can be described loosely as incongruous, the one disrupting a temporal, the other a spatial pattern or congruity." As illustration of his two types of humor, he offers two techniques for amusing a baby, which techniques epitomize all humor. First one must put the baby into a playful mood by laughing or smiling at him. This corresponds to what professional comedians refer to as the essential step of "warming up" an audience. Eastman stresses that nothing is amusing unless

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[1]Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter (New York: Halcyon House, 1939), p. 51.

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the hearer realizes that this is all "in fun." Once the baby is thus "warmed up," Eastman says there are two methods of amusing him. First, by making a face, and second, by offering him something attractive and then withdrawing it as he reaches for it. The first method corresponds to Aristotle's statement that that which is "ugly but not painful" evokes amusement, and the second method corresponds to Kant's "expectation dissolved into nothing."

The present writer takes no exception to this theory of Eastman, but would like to carry it further by offering a possible explanation why the baby should enjoy the above incongruities. Incongruity in itself is not necessarily pleasant or amusing. Should you discover that you are the only person in formal attire at a party, or the only person not in formal attire, the incongruity may be amusing to others, but not to yourself. Unless of course you are uncommonly secure in your self-esteem. Why then should we find some incongruities amusing and others not? I suggest that an incongruity is pleasing, amusing, to the extent that it enhances our self-concept. In the case of the baby, can we consider that he is capable of having a self-concept? If we limit the idea of self-concept (self-esteem) to an explicitly formulated idea of self with its attributes, then it seems beyond the capacity of the baby. But if by self-esteem we mean to include the instinctive feeling of "I'm OK" or "I'm not OK," then this seems as natural to the child as the feeling of "I'm hungry." It requires no reflective

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thinking, only an instinctive response.

The incongruities which Eastman would use to amuse the baby, and which he says epitomize all humor, are amusing to the child, this writer suggests, because they enhance the child's feeling of "I'm OK." In both cases the child apprehends a slight threat to his well-being, and then the disappearance of that threat. This reassuring rebound from the slight menace enhances the feeling of "I'm OK." When the adult makes a "face" at the child, the child's first reaction to this strange ugly face is one of apprehension, to be replaced almost instantaneously by the reassuring realization that this is all in play. Eastman has already remarked that the first and necessary step is to put the baby into a playful mood, which prepares him to realize that subsequent happenings are good-natured and intended "in fun."

The second method Eastman suggests for amusing the child is amenable to the same analysis. When something attractive is offered to the child and then withdrawn as he reaches for it, the instinctive reaction is one of frustration, annoyance. The withdrawal implies a rebuke, a rejection, a slight threat to the child's well-being. But then his realization that this is all in play asserts itself, with the corresponding disappearance of the apparent threat, and a resulting heightened sense of well-being. This alarm-relief-laughter sequence is remarked by Gregory as the baby's reaction to tickling. Gregory also includes this "sudden withdrawal of a menace" or "laughter of relief" as a large

factor in adult laughter.[1]

Summation on incongruity theories

Incongruity theories seem inadquate because they do not explain why some incongruities should amuse us and some annoy us. The various types of incongruities that we have considered seem to be amenable to an explanation by the self-esteem theory. Some involve a put-down of a person or a set of values, and thus a comparative elevation of the hearer; others (nonsense) give us a welcome momentary triumph over reason and logic; others provide relief (and accompanying awareness of inner freedom) from "strained expectation"; still others derive their self-esteem boost from the sudden disappearance of some perceived menace to our well-being; and all offer a tribute to our acuity in perceiving the incongruity.

"Relief from Restraint" Theory of Humor

Monro classifies Freud's theory of humor as an outstanding example of the "relief from restraint" category. Obscene and hostile jokes give us an opportunity to vent the aggressive and sexual urges that we usually restrain. Innocent jokes, notably nonsense humor, enable us momentarily to cast off the restraints of reason, that "untiring and tiresome governess." Humor proper, laughing at oneself

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[1]J. C. Gregory, The Nature of Laughter (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1924), p. 204, p. 210.

in circumstances that would otherwise be distressing, is a relief from the restraint that the negative emotions of sorrow or anger or embarrassment would impose upon us. Slightly more complex is the element of relief from restraint in "the comic," that is, in our amusement at the ludicrous appearance or behavior or speech of others. Here, according to Freud, we unconsciously mime the exaggerated behavior of the other, and even mime his exaggerated appearance, then, comparing this exaggeration with our own normal behavior or appearance, we cease the miming midway and thus effect an economy of "ideation." As we recall, some sort of psychic economy is for Freud the ultimate key to our pleasure in the humorous. Freud does not make any connection between this and some form of relief from restraint, nor should he be expected to do so, inasmuch as he did not propose that all his explanations of the humorous fall within the relief from restraint category. This is Monro's classification of Freud's theories. Monro himself does not specify how the comic falls into the classification of relief from restraint, perhaps feeling it is sufficiently evident that in the process of the comic we are relieved from the restraint that excessive mimetic ideation would impose upon us.

We have considered in a previous section how the self-esteem theory can explain the various categories of the humorous that Freud proposes, so nothing further need by said on that point. However, it may be apropos to present some of the criticisms that Monro makes of Freud's theories on the

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humorous. First, he points out that in many humorous plays upon words there is no psychic economy, but rather considerable ingenuity and artistry that requires more psychic expenditure than would be required by silence, or by a prosaic statement of fact.

Secondly, Monro has difficulty with Freud's concept of ideational economy in miming the efforts of the comic person. Monro points out that according to Freud's theory, if we see a clown struggling to lift a feather, we compare his efforts with our own effortless lifting of the feather and thereby effect a pleasurable economy in our favor. However, if we see the clown lift what seems to be a ton weight with one finger we find it amusing, even though the economy of effort is not in our favor but in the clown's. However, it seems to the present writer that Freud might answer such an objection by suggesting that as the clown begins his lift of the ton weight, we mimic his behavior and set our muscles for a gigantic effort. When the clown easily lifts the weight with one finger, we are spared the empathetic straining of our muscles, i.e., we effect a psychic economy.

Monro concludes that Freud's theory, although it has valid and valuable insights, is deficient in explaining the humor in incongruities. For instance, we meet a wispy little man at a party, he calls his wife over to introduce her, and she turns out to be a beefy Amazon. Politeness, or sophistication, prevents us from snickering, but the incongruity is amusing. It is difficult to see how Freud can explain

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this and other such incongruities by any psychic economy, whether of inhibition, of affect, or of ideation.[1] Our mimetic ideation is set in anticipation of a wispy little woman, and we are forced to readjust to the mimetic ideation of the Amazon, which is hardly an economy. And not being a psychic economy, it is not a relief from the restraint imposed by psychic expenditure.

In addition to this weakness in the "relief from restraint" theory, it seems to be less basic than is the self-esteem theory. Relief from restraint is removal of an obstacle, which is only desirable as a means to the acquisition of a good. This more basic concept, acquisition of a good, is the core concept in self-esteem, which is awareness of the acquisition or possession of a good. Taking a particular example, the relief from restaint theory explains that we find pleasure in a dirty joke because it affords a relief from restraining inhibitions. But this still leaves the more basic question, why should relief from restraining inhibition give us pleasure? The self-esteem theory answers this more basic question. The sudden release from inhibition makes us aware of a sense of inner freedom, a much

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[1]How would the self-esteem theory explain the amusement we feel in such an incongruity? Actually, this is a form of what Freud calls the comic, which we have explained according to the self-esteem theory in our previous discussion on Freud. The abnormality in the marital situation of the couple points up the more desirable normality in our own situation, giving us a small subconscious mood of self-congratulation.

cherished good. And, as we have noted previously, the dirty joke offers us other sources of a self-esteem increment: evidence of our worldly sophistication (if the joke is cleverly phrased), and the reassurance that our prurient interests are not really reprehensible, since they are shared by congenial people.

The Ambivalence Theory

The foremost exponent of this theory, J. Y. T. Greig, explains laughter in the following manner: a love activity has been interfered with, generating the emotion of hate against the obstacle; energy is summoned up to combat the obstacle; the obstacle is suddenly overcome and the unneeded energy is discharged in a laugh.

> . . . the laugh is a response within the uncertain and ill-coordinated behavior of the instinct of love. It appears to arise within such behavior when an obstruction of some kind is first encountered, and then, no matter how, suddenly overcome; it marks the escape of psycho-physical energy mobilized to meet the obstruction, but not actually required for that purpose, and therefore for the moment surplus.
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> . . . from whatever side we make our approach, we accumulate evidence pointing to the intimate connection between love and laughter.[1]

There is an obvious similarity between this "ambivalence of emotions" theory and Freud's "psychic economy" theory, in which the saved energy is discharged in a laugh. Monro could have also classified this theory in the "relief from restraint" category, inasmuch as the laugher has been

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[1]J. Y. T. Greig, The Psychology of Laughter and Comedy (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1923), p. 222.

relieved from the restraint upon his love activities. (Greig uses the word "love" in the Freudian sense--having a sexual origin and manifesting itself in a wide spectrum of behavior, from directly erotic to sublimated relationships.)

Greig explains the origin of the laugh thus: the infant has been sucking at the breast (or bottle) and is thus experiencing a love emotion; suddenly something interferes with his sucking; the infant takes a deep breath to brace himself against this obstacle, and if he is unable to overcome it, the breath is expelled in crying; but if he is able to overcome the obstacle, the breath is expelled in the first infantile beginnings of laughter. Causes of childhood laughter--tickling, being tossed about by an adult, being chased--all combine an emotion of affection toward the other with a fear of being hurt. As long as the former predominates, laughter will result.

In explaining adult laughter, Greig maintains that we laugh at obscene jokes because of the conflict between our sexual interest and our natural modesty, with the former triumphing. We laugh at examples of the put-down, i.e., hostility manifested toward another, when our feelings are ambivalent toward the other. We have a feeling of hostility toward him but also a feeling of sympathy.

Monro finds Greig's theory deficient in some points. We do not laugh at the put-down only when we have ambivalent feelings for the victim; even when we feel unmitigated hostility toward him we may laugh at his downfall. Also,

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Monro feels Greig is too prone to solve difficult cases by contriving to find a sex symbol somewhere in the picture, thus giving him occasion to introduce the love emotion, which he can then contrast with another emotion to satisfy his ambivalence theory. Here, says Monro, Greig is a more extreme Freudian than is Freud. "The more far-fetched speculations about phallic symbols and the like occur only in the disciple, and never in the master."[1]

Greig's theory fits very nicely within the framework of the self-esteem theory. The core feature, overcoming an obstacle to our desires, naturally gives us a heightened sense of our own prowess, a sudden increase in our sense of well-being. At the risk of belaboring the obvious, overcoming the obstacle to our desire makes us aware of our possession of the following goods: progress toward (or actual possession of) the object of our desires, and competence in overcoming obstacles. Thus explained, the other features of Greig's theory--the conflict of emotions, that the original obstructed activity be a love activity, and that the laugh is a discharge of energy mobilized to meet the obstacle--are rendered unnecessary.

The "Inappropriateness Theory"

Having presented and analyzed the preceding theories of humor Monro concludes:

> We have found strength and weakness in every theory. We can make out a case for all of them; we are satisfied

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[1]Monro, Argument of Laughter, p. 221.

with none of them.[1]

Monro then proposes his own theory of humor, having found that an element of inappropriateness underlies all--or almost all--of the examples of humor considered in his book.

> We have returned continually to the linking of disparates, to the collision of different mental spheres, to the obtrusion into one context of what belongs in another. . . . If we want a single convenient word for it, we may call it inappropriateness.[2]

It is difficult to see what new element Monro has added to the centuries-old theory that perception of an incongruity is what makes us laugh. What significant difference is there between inappropriate and incongruous? His theory must meet the same criticism that is offered against the incongruity theory: it does not go deep enough, it does not explain why some examples of the inappropriate make us laugh and why some make us cry.

Monro realizes that his theory is in the incongruity category and attempts to answer the problem by suggesting that the "funny inappropriate" can be distinguished from the merely inappropriate by having a modicum of appropriateness, something which plainly <u>does</u> belong but is contrary to our expectations.

> Of course, we could not in any case simply define 'funny' as 'inappropriate,' because all inappropriate things are not funny. . . . If we go on to ask the differentia, it resides, I suggest, in this, that there is an element of appropriateness in the inappropriate, when it is

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[1]Ibid., p. 235. [2]Ibid.

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> funny. It is not merely a question of something intruding where it does not belong, but of something which plainly does belong, but is not allowed for by our pre-existing attitude. The result is what Eastman calls 'the collapse of a pattern,' or what Kant calls 'frustrated expectation.' The pre-existing attitude is shattered, at least momentarily. It is when it is not shattered, when it still asserts itself, that we feel shame or distress.[1]

Inasmuch as the key element seems to resolve itself into the essential feature of the Eastman or Kant theories, how does Monro's theory differ from those of Eastman and Kant? He does not enlighten us on that point.

Monro does display an admirable humility about his theory, admitting that it does not offer a convincing explanation for our laughter at the small misfortunes of others, such as being hit with a custard pie, or slipping on a banana peel.

> It is true, for instance, that we find small misfortunes funny. If our theory is sound, this is because it is in the nature of small misfortunes to have the special kind of inappropriateness we have described. It is not clear that this is the case, and that is the weakness of the theory.[2]

We have seen that the self-esteem theory offers an obvious explanation for our amusement at the small mishaps of others--their misfortune sharply points up our own more fortunate situation, making us feel a small glow of self-congratulation. "Thank God it is him and not me."

Our previous critique of the incongruity theory applies also to Monro's inappropriateness theory.

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[1]Ibid., p. 255. [2]Ibid.

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The Liberation Theory

Harvey Mindess' Laughter and Liberation (1971) is a variant of the relief from restraint theory of humor. The jokes in it are recent and truly funny, a welcome change from the usual psychological or philosophical analysis of humor (such as the present study). Mindess' book is also worthwhile because of its valuable insights, contemporary approach, and felicity of expression.

It is Mindess' thesis that humor liberates us from "the many inhibitions and restrictions under which we live our daily lives."[1] His chapter headings spell out these inhibitions and restrictions: conformity, inferiority, morality, reason, language, naivete, redundancy, seriousness, egotism. It seems at first that his theory is concerned with the results of humor rather than with its causes. When he says that humor frees us from restrictions, this is an effect of humor, rather than a cause.

> What it [his theory] claims, in essence, is that our sense of humor frees us from the constraints of conventionality, morality, reason, and other restrictive forces.[2]

But actually he intends these freedoms as not only the result of our sense of humor, but also as the causes of our laughter. He says:

> It [his theory] elucidates the entire, varied range of things that make us laugh, omits neither intellectual,

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[1]Harvey Mindess, Laughter and Liberation (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Co., 1971), p. 241.

[2]Ibid.

perceptual, nor emotional components.[1]

His book reveals that these "things that make us laugh" are the freedoms from the various restrictions mentioned above.

Mindess is confident that his theory is of universal application, explaining all humor and embracing the two most popular theories, superiority and incongruity. We will consider each of the freedoms he proposes as components of humor, and discover whether an increase of self-esteem is involved in each.

Freedom from inferiority

Mindess sees that all (almost all?) of us have inferiority feelings. "For the individual who goes beyond coping with his inferiority feelings and eradicates them completely turns out, in the end, to be an ass. Inferiority, after all, is akin to humility."[2] Humor offers us a way to hit back at the persons and ideas that cause us to feel inferior. "Our sense of humor frees us from inferiority by degrading both our superiors and the quest for superiority itself."[3] "Humor is the weapon of the underdog. It is one way in which he revives his self-esteem . . . ."[4] Humor bolsters our self-esteem by enabling us to accept our defects. "When we love ourselves in our awkwardness, our ugliness, we have nothing

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[1]Ibid.

[2]Ibid., p. 55.

[3]Ibid.

[4]Ibid., p. 138.

more to envy. We are freed from inferiority by the expedient of embracing our inferiority."[1] All these insights accord perfectly with the self-esteem theory.

Freedom from morality

Mindess is Freudian both in his clear-sighted realization of the lustful and hostile motivations in our nature, and in his semi-endorsement of those motivations. He realizes that much of our humor is a joy at being able to express such urges in a socially acceptable way. "The spirit of humor demands that we acknowledge, in spite of our need for love, our undeniable lust, and in spite of our capacity for caring, our inclination to not give a good goddamn."[2] "We must also modify our moral inhibitions. Unadulterated lust, we must admit, is part of our nature and deserves its place in any inventory of our being. . . . Callous disregard for human suffering is another shameful part of our true being. It too must be acknowledged for our sense of humor to expand."[3] Mindess is well aware that conventional morality, condemning selfishness, lust and hostility, is a threat to our self-esteem. A sense of humor that frees us from conventional morality also frees us from the pall that it can cast over our self-esteem. Mindess regards this as a good thing, a freedom to be celebrated. Our own self-esteem theory, proposed in these pages, is not concerned with such value judgments.

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[1]Ibid., p. 56. [2]Ibid., p. 73. [3]Ibid., p. 138.

Freedom from reason

Mindess shares the insight of other writers as to the repressive role that reason and logic can have on our self-esteem, keeping us tied strictly to reality and curtailing the Walter Mitty day-dreams and rationalizations that are so consoling to our self-esteem.

> As anyone recalling youthful dreams of glory can attest and as the state of romantic infatuation proves, an irrational distortion of reality is a potent formula for bliss. . . . we must admit that reason is an agent of constriction over the free and glorious play of the mind.[1]

Freedom from naivete

By naivete, Mindess means our refusal to face the unpleasant aspects of our nature, and our belief in absolute truth and in unqualified devotion to any movement or ideology. Once we shed this naivete:

> . . . we could no longer support any cause or movement, subscribe to any political or philosophical doctrine. . . . Nor could we believe in ourselves, in the sense of taking ourselves seriously, for we would be acutely aware of our fundamental ambivalence and inescapable dishonesty.[2]

For humor to enjoy its full play, we must realize that "utter relativity is humor's deepest root."[3] Nothing must be sacred; we must develop the sophistication that will enable us to laugh at the pretense of virtue and nobility that most of us affect.

Shrewd insight into the hypocrisy that rules the world

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[1]Ibid., p. 80. [2]Ibid., p. 105. [3]Ibid.

> takes humor a long way on its developmental journey. We must perceive the brutal facts behind the veils of pretense with which everyone--ourselves included--cloaks his intentions.[1]

And how gratifying to our self-esteem is this "shrewd insight into the hypocrisy that rules the world." How we congratulate ourselves on this freedom from naivete, this sophistication, this self-honesty that enables us to see through even our own self-righteous rationalizations. In a previously cited passage de Lamenais remarks on this pride we take even in our own self-unmasking:

> "The self," he said, "which discovers the ridiculous in one of the inferior regions of its being, separates itself from that at which it laughs, distinguishes itself from it, and rejoices inwardly at a sagacity which elevates it in its own esteem. Thus pride feeds even upon the sight of certain weaknesses concealed in the folds of the heart, and which it has been able to discover. I am not the dupe of myself--so we say--and we admire ourselves for that."[2]

Freedom from language

Here Mindess is referring to humor that depends upon a play on words--puns, limericks, etc. The pleasure element here is double: first, a breaking of the restrictions and restraints that language imposes upon us, and secondly, the enjoyment of a creative process.

There is no difficulty in explaining this by the self-esteem theory. When Mindess says that the pun gives the punster a sense of mental expansion, he is saying that it makes him aware of the possession of a good--a brief feeling of

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[1]Ibid., p. 139. [2]Eastman, Sense of Humor, p. 140.

freedom and expansion. And since self-esteem is by definition an awareness of good possessed by self, this "sense of mental expansion" is an increment of self-esteem.

Further, inasmuch as a pun is a small nose-thumbing at the conveptions of meaning and grammar, it gives us a pale imitation of the devil-may-care thrill of superiority that comes from flouting the weightier conventions of law and morality.

Then too, engaging in a creative process, as Mindess describes punning, is gratifying to our self-esteem.

Freedom from redundancy

By redundancy Mindess means that we are all in a personality rut, unwitting prisoners to stereotyped styles of living. Breaking out of that rut can be a form of humor. Mindess offers the example he witnessed: guests at a formal party began jumping into the swimming pool, fully or partially clothed, generating much merriment. Once again, we offer the explanation that the flouting of convention is a declaration of superiority. "I am too big, too free, too fearless, too original, to be bound by petty conventions. I am one of the beautiful, emancipated people." A great self-esteeem booster. It is a declaration of independence, and a declaration of independence makes us stand a little taller.

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Freedom from seriousness

Life is a game. We must learn to live in a playful mood. "If we could adopt the attitude of 'fooling around' not just in telling jokes but in the trying arena of our daily lives, we would frolic through our years."[1] We must learn to laugh at ourselves, to find ironic humor in our small troubles.

> Now, if when these events occur, we remain identified with our wounds, they may very well break us. But if, instead, we perceive the irony of our tragic plight, the unimportance of our downfall, the comedy of our despair, we will in that instant have risen above it.[2]

This is Freud's category of humor proper, laughter at self. We have already dealt at some length with the self-esteem increment that is the source of pleasure here. It is summed up in the words "rise above it." This is only possible when we advert to some more noble excellence we possess which gives us the leverage, the vantage point, to rise above our present loss. Our "rising above it" is an implicit assertion that, as Freud phrases it, "I am too big, too fine, to be distressed by these things."

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[1]Ibid., p. 122. Here Mindess gives us a perceptive and endearing self-insight, confessing that his efforts in preparing this book have been in direct contradiction to the gospel he has been preaching:

> Nor is it only this chapter in which I have been at odds with myself. Throughout this entire work I have preached the spirit of humor and practiced the spirit of seriousness. The whole conception of a book of this nature, in fact, is antithetical to its premises. Not only is it serious; it is also redundant; it attempts, successfully or not, to make sense; and, to anticipate our next chapter, it is motivated largely by egotistical needs. (Ibid., p.121).

[2]Ibid., p. 125.

Freedom from egotism

Here Mindess gets to the nitty-gritty. He recognizes that our deepest need is to feel important, worthwhile, respected. Such a need is sometimes derogated by calling it ego, pride, or conceit, but the fact remains that this is what makes us tick. Mindess recognizes that this is where we all live, even the most dedicated and apparently selfless among us:

> The date before us suggest that being treated as trivial or inconsequential is far more damaging to our self-esteem than any experience we can name. It appears, therefore, that above all else we need to matter: to be taken seriously for better or worse.
>
> Our egos require it. Our pride, our conceit requires that other people look on us as important, that they treat us with respect. Otherwise, we are afraid that we amount to nothing.[1]

Mindess suggests that there may be some human beings who have relinquished their egos and found true humility, but that it is difficult to find living examples. Even apparent examples taken from history or literature may be illusory"

> The reliquishing of ambition, after all, may be seen as a kind of ambition, and the attainment of humility may be the source of unending pride.[2]

He believes that we come closest to humility when we learn to laugh at ourselves "with affection." Our comment is that praiseworthy though this ability to laugh at self is, it is not a relinquishing of self-esteem, but actually is an assertion of our enduring excellence which surpasses our present defects or sorrows. The very phrase, "with affection" confirms this, because affection is based upon perceived good

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[1]Ibid., p. 128. [2]Ibid., p. 131.

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in the object of affection.

Summary of
Mindess' theory

We have considered the various freedoms that Mindess associates with laughter, and have found that the pleasurable element in each can be traced to an increase of self-esteem.[1] With due respect to the validity of Mindess' insights, we suggest that the self-esteem theory is more basic than the liberation theory. The process of liberation is removal of obstacles to our possession of good. Liberation is desired for the more basic goal, awareness of possession of good, which is to say, self-esteem.

In addition, it seem that the liberation theory is inadequate in its explanation of why incongruity is sometimes funny. Mindess says incongruity is one aspect of the liberation theory, "simply the liberation from expected images or thoughts."[2] And why is this pleasurable? Because liberation from restrictive forces releases our vitality, and this is pleasurable.

> What it [his theory] claims, in essence, is that our sense of humor frees us from the constraints of conventionality, morality, reason, and other restrictive forces. So doing, it naturally makes us joyful, for

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[1]Once again, we do not claim that we have made a case that the self-esteem explanation is necessarily the only explanation for laughter. The best any theory can do in its defence (apart from consistently accurate prediction of future events) is offer reasonable explanations for the phenomena in its field. The competing theories must then be judged on the basis of their comprehensiveness and simplicity.

[2]Ibid., p. 242.

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any release of our vitality is bound to be pleasurable.[1]

This pleasure from release of vitality is a variant of Freud's "pleasure from psychic economy." Both see pleasure arising from additional energy being available. And it is debatable that this happens when we are "liberated from expected images or thoughts." Rather than a psychic economy, this seems to involve additional psychic expenditure to cope with the unexpected.

Further, liberation from expected images or thoughts is not always pleasurable. For example, we see what appears to be the back of an old friend, slap him on the back in greeting, he turns around and it is not our old friend but a total stranger. Seldom does this bring us pleasure. More likely to be pleasurable is its exact opposite, what Freud calls "rediscovery of the familiar." Therefore, unless we have missed something in Mindess' excellent book, his theory does seem inadequate in its explanation of the occasional humor in the incongruous.

Summary of Comparison Between Theories

We have seen that the self-esteem theory is more basic than the other theories considered: it enables us to answer the question "why?" as applied to the other theories. Why does superiority to another give us pleasure? Because a favorable comparison with another sharply points up our own possession of good. Why does the perception of incongruity

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[1]Ibid., p. 241.

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give us pleasure? In those cases where it does give us pleasure rather than annoyance, it is because the incongruity has in some way made us appreciate our own possession of good--perhaps our mental sharpness in perceiving the incongruity, or perhaps because the incongruity involved some put-down of a person, ideas, or values with which we disagree. Why does relief from restraint give us pleasure? Because it involves the disappearance of some threat, large or slight, to our well-being, and hence enables our self-esteem to buoy up in its newly acquired security. The core feature of the ambivalence theory is a triumph over an obstacle to our desires, which obviously yields an increment in self-esteem. The liberation theory resolves itself into the release from restraint theory, and the inappropriateness theory is merely another term for the incongruity theory.

Objections to the Self-Esteem Theory, With Answers

A theory must be able to meet objections raised against it, or at least meet them better than do competing theories. In this section we will attempt to answer objections made directly against the self-esteem theory, and also we will offer answers to objections raised by various authors against Hobbes' theory of humor, so similar to our own.

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Sudden Increase of Self-Esteem With No Laughter

Objection: Sometimes a sudden increment of self-esteem does not cause us to laugh. For instance, if we are just not in the mood. Therefore it seems that the self-esteem theory does not hold in this case.

Answer: A sudden increase of self-esteem is a necessary cause for laughter, but not a necessitating cause. That is, the increase must be present, but sometimes other factors (notably, a depressed mood or a serious mood) keep us from laughing.

How can we explain the effect that mood has upon our readiness to laugh? In a jovial mood, or its poor cousin, a silly mood, we are just on the verge of laughter, ready to chuckle or giggle at anything with the faintest pretense to humor. Jokes that seem uproarious to us when we have had a few drinks are not nearly so funny the next morning. In a mood of intense concentration we may resent an attempt to make us laugh. Comedians know that they must "warm up" their audiences to get hearty laughter. Can the self-esteem theory offer any explanation for this?

It seems that there are two basic moods that are not responsive to humor. One is the serious "let's get the job done" mood, and the other is the depressed "nobody loves me" mood. First, the serious mood. There are an almost infinite variety of ways that are open to us in our perpetual quest for a heightened sense of self-worth, and humor, delightful though it is, does not have as high a priority

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as do some more serious pursuits. If at the moment we are intent on bigger game, that is, if reputation is at stake, or money, or success in a venture, we are not as receptive to the "Little League" ego boost we might get from a joke. If the humor will forward our social relationships and thus help the bigger venture, fine. Otherwise, "don't bother me with jokes now, this is serious business." Over-achievers are noted for not being long on a sense of humor, always concentrating as they do on the main chance.

The person in a depressed mood, which is to say, the person with a low self-esteem, temporary or habitual, even though at this point he is not preoccupied with some serious endeavor, is not likely to laugh at our attempts at humor. He may mildly appreciate our jokes, but they do not boost his self-esteem to the laugh threshold. Gradually, however, we may "cheer him up," that is, raise his self-esteem level, until he can respond with a laugh.

When our ego level is high, close to the bubbling point, and we are not under the pressure of more serious business, it takes only the little lift we get from humor to raise our self-esteem level to the point where it will spill out in laughter.

"The Self-Esteem Theory Denigrates Laughter"

Objection: The self-esteem theory presents too pessimistic a picture, both of laughter and of human nature. Laughter is one of the bright, redeeming features of the

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human scene. How dreary life would be without laughter! And yet you tell us that it is an expression of selfishness!

Answer: Laughter is delightful, especially when we share that laughter with congenial persons. A sudden awareness of our own excellence is also delightful, additionally so when that judgment is confirmed by the testimony of others. It is not accurate to equate our pleasure in the awareness of our own excellence with selfishness, because the latter has a pejorative connotation which the former need not have.

For perspective, let it be noted that laughter can also be a most disagreeable and unpleasant thing--when it is directed against ourselves. People of every culture hate to be laughted at, recognizing that the laugher is belittling the laughee.

"A Sense of Humor is Good, But Pleasure in Superiority is Bad"

Objection: We have high regard for person A, who has a good sense of humor. But we feel distaste for person B, who goes about lording it over other people. Yet the self-esteem theory asserts that person A and person B are one and the same--he laughs because he feels superior to other people.

Answer: A momentary feeling of superiority in some particular aspect to another person is the cause of our pleasure in some types of humor. But in other types of humor the source of our pleasure is different. It may be a feeling of superiority, not to a person, but to a code of values or to an institution. Or it may be a feeling of superiority over

our own small mishap, weakness or foible. Or, finally, laughing may be due to sheer joy of living, that is, a sudden advertence to our good fortune and well-being.

We do have a high regard for the person who has the sense of humor that is able to laugh at self. As Freud says, this is one of man's highest psychic achievements. Such a person is certainly not "lording it over others." And we have a high regard for--or at least an enjoyment of--the person with a sense of humor that is able to deftly ridicule the persons, ideas and values toward which we feel some hostility. But we do not have a high regard for the person whose sense of humor leads him to ridicule our own cherished values, or to play practical jokes on others. He is, in his way, lording it over others.

"Often We Are Not Aware of
Any Increment in Self-Esteem"

Objection: The self-esteem theory specifies that laughter arises from a sudden awareness of some good possessed by self. But I have carefully examined my feelings after laughing and I was not aware, in this connection, of some good possessed by self. Ergo thesis destruitur.

Answer: The awareness need not always be explicit and conscious, although sometimes it is. More usually, the awareness is automatic, implicit, subconscious. We have a built-in propensity to conceal our unwelcome feelings, awarenesses and motivations from our conscious mind. Realities that are offensive to our ego we have a tendency

to forget, repress, deny. These ego defense mechanisms and rationalizations are not the exclusive devices of the neurotic, but are the instinctive modus operandi of all of us, to be overcome only by a self-honesty that verges on the heroic. It is no insult to Freud to suggest that, despite his ruthless unmasking of human nature, he shared in the foibles of that nature. For example, he readily ascribes the child's gleeful laughter over another's mishap to an awareness of superiority--"he fell but I didn't!"--but curiously then makes the statment that the adult, laughing at the same mishap, is not laughing from the same motive. Why is the adult laughing? "We do not know,"[1] says Freud. To admit that adults,[2] including respected and dedicated professional men, would stoop to Schadenfreude is simply too painful for Freud's ego. Ego defense demands that the idea be denied. We all do similar things on occasion.

Homer tells us that the gods on Mt. Olympus kept the crippled Hephaestus among them in order that the heavenly halls would be in constant glee over his clumsy efforts to drag himself about. Myth, yes, but art imitates nature. In a similar vein, Addison, in the famous Spectator Papers, tells us:

Every one laughs at some Body that is in an inferior

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[1]Freud, Jokes, p. 224.

[2]Had Freud, by the term "adult," intended "someone who is really mature," he would have so indicated in some way. The natural supposition is that he meant the average chronological adult.

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> State of Folly to himself. It was formerly the Custom for every great House in England to keep a tame Fool dress'd in Petticoats, that the Heir of the Family might have an opportunity of joking upon him, and divert him-with his Absurdities. For the same Reason Ideots [sic] are still in request in most of the Courts of Germany.[1]

Can we doubt that the above adult laughter was from a feeling of superiority? We recognize something shameful in these cases of laughter and it is small wonder that Freud--and many of the rest of us--could not bring himself to consciously admit such a motivation behind his own laughter at the mishaps of another.

The concept that I might be laughing because of an awareness of some good possessed by myself, or even from a feeling of superiority to a fellow human being, is offensive to my image of myself as a sensitive, other-oriented person, concerned for the welfare of my fellow man. Therefore, rationalization or automatic ego defense mechanisms keep that concept from being admitted to my consciousness. However, sometimes reality does force us to admit unpleasant facts about ourselves despite the frantic rationalizations of our subconscious.

Laughter When Being Tickled Does Not Arise From Increase in Self-Esteem

Objection: When we are tickled we are put in a subordinate position, rendered helpless, made to look ridiculous, and we try to fight it off. All this seems to point to a decrease in self-esteem, and yet we laugh. This seems out

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[1]Joseph Addison, The Spectator, No. 47.

of harmony with the self-esteem theory.

Answer: Often, being tickled is not pleasant. Unless several conditions are present, we usually do not laugh when we are tickled. For laughter to result, we must be in a playful mood, the tickler must be someone we like in a warm, intimate way (not necessarily a sexual attraction), and we must realize the tickler is doing it in a spirit of fun, and we must be the type of person who rather enjoys being tickled, even while protesting and fighting off the tickler.

Under such conditions, why do we laugh? First, let it be noted that the tickler is launching a mock attack. The ticklee squirms, protests, tries to evade, makes ineffectual efforts at resistance. The tickler is laying violent hands on his victim, and violence we ordinarily take as a sign of serious aggression. But the "victim" realizes it is all in fun, and as such is a sign of affection. Very effectively it conveys the message "I like you, cutie." Such a message is a delightful self-esteem booster, if we are "in the mood" and if we like the other person. But if we are not in the mood, the mock attack is an offense to our dignity and physical integrity and as such is a small menace to our self-esteem.

The fact that tickling is a mock attack adds to its appeal, when the conditions are right. Superficially it represents a threat to our well-being, but instantly we realize it is all in fun, the threat vanishes, and we get the sudden self-esteem "bounce back" that always accompanies

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a suddenly vanished threat. "Laughter of relief" is a familiar term. "Whew, that was a close one!", and we laugh in relief.

If someone we don't like attempts to tickle us, we don't laugh. Their message "I like you, cutie" is not a welcome one. Our self-esteem is degraded by any implications of intimacy with that person.[1] Also, no laughter of relief can take place because our self-esteem is still being menaced by the indignity we are suffering through this unwelcome intimacy.

We cannot evoke laughter by tickling ourselves. Why? The message of affection, undeniably present, does not have the element of suddenness that is necessary for laughter. "So I think I'm cute. So what else is new?" Secondly, there is no disappearance of the menace of an attack, because there was no fleeting impression of an attack in the first place.

Actually, sometimes we can tickle ourselves into laughter, contrary to our general experience. Tickling one's nose with a blade of grass sometimes provokes a laugh. The explanation of this laugh is different, however. The feeling of the tickling is pleasant but does not evoke a

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[1]The next time you tickle your loved one and he or she does not laugh, don't file for divorce. Of course he or she still likes you. It's just that she is not in the mood. If we are in a serious mood, we are looking toward larger self-esteem concerns, and don't want to be bothered with the bush-league boost of being cute.

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laugh until we advert to the ludicrous picture we present, lying on the grass tickling our nose with a blade of grass. This laughter at self is due to the incongruity of "a person of my excellence (grown up, mature, respected, etc. etc.) doing such a silly thing." The very silliness of the action causes us to suddenly advert, by contrast, to our greater excellence. Additionally, the ludicrous action makes us advert to the fact that we have an impish, fey, untrammeled side to our nature, an awareness that can be gratifying to our self-esteem.

Objections That Have Been Raised Against Hobbes' Theory, Now Applied to the Self-Esteem Theory

Inasmuch as there is a close similarity between Hobbes' theory of humor and my own, it seems fitting to consider the various objections that have been made against Hobbes' theory, and determine whether my theory is able to meet those objections. Any humor which his "sudden superiority" theory explains is a fortiori explicable by the more inclusive "sudden awareness of a good possessed by self."

In a brief discussion Hobbes points out that men laugh at "their own actions performed never so little beyond their expectation," at "the infirmities of others," at jests, in which the wit consists in "the elegant discovering and conveying to our minds some absurdity or another," and at "absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons." He sums up his famous theory succinctly:

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> I may therefore conclude, that the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly.[1]

The phrasing of my theory involves a difference that may seem small, but will loom larger as we answer objections to Hobbes' theory, as applied to my theory. A concise statement of the latter is:

> The laughter of humor is an expression of pleasure arising from a sudden awareness of some good possessed by self.

Objections by Monro

In his excellent book Argument of Laughter, D. H. Monro concludes his critique of Hobbes:

> Summarizing, the Hobbes formula is a completely satisfactory explanation of many important types of humour. . . . But there still remain two elements which he cannot explain: a purely intellectual pleasure in neatness and skill, and, on the other hand, a pure irrationalism which delights in word associations, rhythms, and sheer absurdity.[2]

By "purely intellectual pleasure in neatness and skill" Monro refers to delight in clever word play. He feels that Hobbes' theory cannot explain this, because Hobbes' theory is based upon "sudden superiority," and the joker's cleverness has not made the amused hearer feel superior to anyone. In response, our perception of the well-turned ambiguity in the clever play upon words has given us fresh evidence of our own mental acuity. In other words, it has given us a sudden

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[1]Hobbes, The Elements of Law, p. 31.

[2]Monro, Argument of Laughter, p. 90.

awareness of a good possessed by self. The fact that the hearer may have been already strongly convinced of his own mental acuity for many years is not here pertinent; the significant element is the suddenness of his adverting to that talent in the present instance. Perhaps the word "adverting" gives the impression of a deliberate and thought-out process, whereas actually of course the delighted reaction is often as automatic and reflex as the knee jerk when hit by the doctor's rubber hammer. Our pleasure in our own sharpness follows immediately upon our "getting the point."

Monro's second objection against Hobbes is that his theory cannot explain "pure irrationalism which delights in word associations, rhythms, and sheer absurdity." All these, Monro sums up under the term "nonsense" humor, and says that it contains three elements:

1) "nonsense is sometimes a means of universe-changing, an instrument of satire or parody."

2) "But we have also found two other elements in nonsense. The first is an intellectual pleasure in the skill with which apparent sense is suddenly revealed as nonsense."

3) "Secondly, there seems an unquestioned delight in nonsense for its own sake, just as there is a delight in word-play for its own sake. And it seems most reasonable to suppose that this is some form of release from restraint, rather than self-esteem."[1]

Regarding the first point, satire, Monro admits "here the Hobbes formula applies fairly well."

As to the intellectual pleasure in word skill, we have already explained how this makes us suddenly advert to a good

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[1]Ibid., p. 89.

possessed by self.

The third element of appeal in nonsense Monro attributes to "some form of release from restraint, rather than to self-esteem." In our discussion of the "relief from restraint" theories of humor we showed that they resolve into a matter of increased self-esteem, despite Monro's dichotomy between the two. Relief from restraint has the double effect of being a triumph over some small menace to our well-being, and also of making us aware of an increase in inner freedom. The awareness of acquiring both of these goods is by definition an increase in self-esteem.

Not only my theory, but also Hobbes' theory can, it seems, explain both of the foregoing cases. He allows for humor arising from a feeling of superiority "over ourselves formerly." In each case where we suddenly become aware of a good possessed by ourselves it can be considered as making us feel superior to ourselves formerly, i.e., prior to the realization. Critics of Hobbes have been fond of concentrating on the "feeling of superiority over others" and have labeled his view as the "degradation theory" or the "contempt theory," thus unjustifiably denigrating it. Such labels overlook the "superiority over ourselves formerly" aspect of his theory, and further, they unjustly equate a feeling of superiority in some limited aspect with contempt for and degradation of the other. We may laugh affectionately at some little foible of a beloved friend, and indeed feel superior to him in this aspect, without any over-all

feeling of superiority toward him, much less any feeling of contempt.

Monro suggests another difficulty in the Hobbes superiority theory of humor. Surely our laughter at someone like Charlie Chaplin cannot spring from a feeling of superiority, for who would want to triumph over such a harmless, unassuming, sympathetic figure like Chaplin. He goes on to say:

> All superiority theories do after all presuppose some basic hostility between men. If we were in thorough sympathy with our fellows, their misfortunes would not make us feel superior. They would, on the contrary, increase our own feeling of insecurity. Superiority theories are only plausible if we suppose that most of our insecurity is caused by other men. This is a sad comment on the human situation, but it may well be true.[1]

It is certainly true that most of our insecurity is caused by other people, just as it is true that most of our security also is caused by other people. Which is simply to say that other people are the strongest influences in our lives.

Most of our insecurity is caused by other people because the predominant way by which we arrive at our own self-evaluation (self-image, self-concept, self-esteem, sense of worth, sense of dignity) is by comparison with others. When another displays excellence in a field in which our own egos are involved, frequently we feel a twinge of inferiority (or a more sanguine type will feel this to be a challenge to be met by displaying his own surpassing excellence in that field, or by somehow disparaging the

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[1]Ibid., p. 202.

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other).

Conversely, when the clear inferiority of the other in some aspect is suddenly brought to our attention, we feel an amused condescension, manifesting itself perhaps in an indulgent chuckle, perhaps in a hearty laugh. Nor is this necessarily an expression of hostility. The good-natured joshing, ribbing, kidding, that we see in a group of friends is based on calling the attention of the others to some non-serious foible or shortcoming of one of the members.

But why should we laugh at such a "harmless, unassuming, sympathetic figure like Charlie Chaplin"? Actually, this droll little fellow is a put-down of the figure that he is caricaturing, the gay (in the old sense) boulevardier, the dashing man-about-town. The cut-away coat, the boutonniere, the cane, bowler, the insouciance (carried by Chaplin to the point of semi-conscious vapidity) are hallmarks of a character of the 1920's and earlier who seemingly "has the world by the tail." Such a person in the original is certainly not unassuming, and most of us do not find him entirely sympathetic. His polished suavity can make the rest of us feel like bumpkins. Chaplin's burlesque put-down of that character is comforting and gives us leverage for feeling superior to the original type. Chaplin's caricature is harmless, unassuming and sympathetic for that very reason.

Another, and possibly more important, element in Chaplin's appeal is our identification with this little guy,

apparently so helpless, pitted against the "system" and emerging victorious. His victory--and for him, mere survival is a victory--is our victory, vicariously.

Justice Oliver Wendall Holmes suggested an additional way in which we derive a self-esteem increment and thus a laugh from humorists.

> "Do you know," writes Oliver Wendall Holmes--mildly retaining an estimate that has often been more pungently expressed--"that you feel a little superior to every man who makes you laugh, whether by making faces or verses? Are you aware that you have a pleasant sense of patronizing him . . . ?"[1]

Part of this feeling of superiority derives from the fact that in making a clown of himself, the other has to some degree debased himself. Also, or perhaps this is the same thing, by the very fact that he is trying to be funny we realize that he is trying to please us, and to that extent is pleading for our approval, which gives us the psychological advantage, making us feel superior in this aspect at this moment. This is most pleasing when the comedian is a famous person, someone to whom we might feel inferior in other respects, especially envious of his entertainment talents.

Objections
by Piddington

In his Psychology of Laughter Ralph Piddington raises some objections to Hobbes' theory of humor. I will consider

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[1]Gregory, The Nature of Laughter, p. 226.

these objections as leveled against my own theory, and attempt to answer them. Piddington says:

> Hobbes' "sudden glory" theory is one of the best known views of laughter. The theory as formulated by Hobbes is open to two very serious objections. In the first place, it does not attempt to account for the laugh of sheer delight, which does not necessarily involve a feeling of superiority, though such a feeling may be one of its occasions. In the second place, Hobbes' theory does not account for the laughter which is frequently aroused by situations in which no human agent is involved; for example, a pun unintentionally introduced into a printed passage as a result of a misprint.[1]

The first of these objections does not really apply to the self-esteem theory, because, as we have pointed out previously, the latter does not require a feeling of superiority as the cause of laughter, though it admits that this is frequently present. However, let us see what is the self-esteem source in the laughter of sheer delight. As an example of the "laugh of pure delight" we offer the case of small children chasing each other about on the lawn, romping, wrestling and laughing in glee. Wherein lies the appeal of such activity for the children? First of all, it is pleasant to exercise our faculties. Most of us recall from the days of our youth the joy of running effortlessly along a sunny beach, leaping and rejoicing in our good health and physical competence. In such situations it is natural for a laugh of sheer delight to come bubbling up. These moments of sheer delight in the exercise of our faculties are more frequent when we are first coming into an awareness of

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[1]Piddington, Psychology of Laughter, p. 15.

our newly acquired skill. For the small child, this running and romping and wrestling is a relatively new skill, whose zesty appeal time and use has not yet dulled. Accompanying the activity is an exhilarating sense of freedom from restraint, and an exultation in one's ability and power, an ability and power that is relatively puny, but which looms large for the child because it is newly acquired.

A second factor is the presence of the companion in play. The fact that the other child is willing to engage in the play is a sign of mutual acceptance and approval, which each child recognizes spontaneously. Such acceptance is a testimony to our own likeability.

Thus the romping provides occasion for the child to be repeatedly aware, implicitly, of goods possessed by himself: a sense of freedom, a sense of his own physical skill, acceptance by a companion, likeability.

Piddington's second objection states that Hobbes' theory cannot account for the laughter "frequently aroused by situations in which no human agent is involved; for example, a pun unintentionally introduced into a printed passage as the result of a misprint." We have already noted, in response to Monro's objections, that perception of the clever play upon words (unintended in this case) is a small tribute to the acuity of the observer, and thus gives him a small glow of self-congratulation. Often however in such an unintended misprint there is an implicit put-down: some persons or ideas are presented in a less than favorable light.

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Indeed the misprint is funny to the extent that this is the case, as any reader of the selected misprints quoted in the New Yorker magazine will testify. This put-down offers additional opportunity for our own small moment of superiority.

Thus in both the cases cited by Piddington there is ample occasion for a "sudden awareness of good possessed by self." It seems that Hobbes' theory also could answer the two objections if we broadly apply his "superior in comparison to ourselves" formula, and also his condition that we sometimes laugh at "absurdities and infirmities abstracted from persons." However, we will not go into detail on that, inasmuch as our concern is not vindication of Hobbes' theory, but rather to show the applicability of the "sudden awareness of good possessed by self" theory.

Piddington offers two more objections against Hobbes' theory, originating with Alexander Bain in his book The Emotions and the Will (1888):

> The theory of Hobbes is also inadquate because, though we often laugh as a result of the realization of our own superiority, laughter may be occasioned by a sympathetic pleasure at the triumph (through ridicule) of another person, as in the enjoyment of literature. Moreover, he says, Hobbes' theory is inadquate to account for humour in which there is always something "genial and loving," with which the essential element of degradation is "as it were, oiled."[1]

In the first case cited, the response can be made that we laugh because of the triumph of a person with whom we identify, and thus his good is, vicariously, our own. Or,

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[1]Ibid., p. 175.

even when we do not identify with the one triumphing, we are offered the occasion for feeling superior to the person, institution or value being ridiculed.

In the second case, a genial feeling, even a loving attitude, is not inconsistent with a feeling of superiority over another--at least a limited feeling of superiority in some particular aspect. It is common human experience that often the small foibles or weaknesses or vulnerabilities of our friends and loved ones only make us love them more. As a matter of fact, we find it quite difficult to love someone who is superior to us in every way. How can you summon up a genial and loving attitude toward someone who constantly makes you feel inferior by comparison? It is indeed possible to warmly love a hero-figure with whom we identify, and who is superior to us in every way, but this is because his excellence has become to an extent our own, vicariously. But among our daily companions, with whom we compare ourselves, we are repelled by anything approaching absolute perfection. We feel more genial and loving toward someone who makes us feel needed, strong and capable. A child in its crib is more likely to evoke in us a genial and loving feeling than is a boy genius. A tiger cub evokes in us warm and cuddly feelings, whereas the appearance of its mother chills our geniality. The feeling of loving geniality toward someone to whom we feel superior, indeed largely because he gives us a feeling of superiority, has been aroused in millions of TV viewers by the famous comedian

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Foster Brooks, known as "The Lovable Lush" for his characterization of an erstwhile dignified and distinguished gentleman, now stupifyingly drunk but attempting to disguise that fact as he gives a speech. Thus, a feeling of superiority is not always antithetical to an accompanying "genial and loving" feeling, as the objector seems to suppose, but sometimes the feeling of superiority actually contributes to the loving geniality.

Objections by Eastman

The principle message in Max Eastman's books The Sense of Humor (1922) and Enjoyment of Laughter (1936) is a defense of humor against what he feels is Hobbes' identification of humor with "egotism and scorn" and "egotistical cruelty" (Eastman's words). Before considering Eastman's objections, it seems appropriate to comment that his characterization of Hobbes' theory may well be both extremist and inaccurate. Inaccurate because the feeling of superiority mentioned by Hobbes need not be equated with scorn, nor with egotistical cruelty, because we often feel especially genial toward those whose little foibles arouse amused condescension in us, as we do toward the "Lovable Lush" Foster Brooks. And extremist, because the word "egotism" is used to suggest something base and unworthy, whereas actually the desire for a feeling of superiority to others or "to ourselves formerly" finds its expression also in competition and in self-improvement endeavors, which are certainly not base and

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unworthy. However, we must remember that our concern here is not a defense of Hobbes, but rather to discover whether the objections raised against Hobbes are applicable to and answerable by our similar "sudden awareness of good possessed by self" theory.

Eastman quotes two objections to Hobbes from Jean Paul Richter:

> No one is ashamed of having laughed, but we should be ashamed of such a gross elevation of ourselves as Hobbes describes. And finally, no laugher takes it badly, but right well, if a hundred thousand others laugh with him, and thus a hundred thousand self-elevations surround his; which would be impossible if Hobbes were right.[1]

"No one is ashamed of having laughed." Is it not common experience that sometimes our laughter has deeply hurt the person thus ridiculed? And should not the person of deep sympathies be ashamed of having laughed in such a case?

But ordinarily the consequences of laughter are not so serious, and it hardly seems a "gross elevation of ourselves" to take pleasure in our own possession of good, nor even in a momentary good-natured feeling of superiority to someone else. Even the noblest natures seek excellence and take pleasure in the possession of excellence. A. Maslow touches a responsive chord in most of us when he proposes self-actualization, self-perfection, as man's highest endeavor.

Our rejoicing to have fellow laughers join us is

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[1]Eastman, Enjoyment of Laughter, p. 330.

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in perfect accord with the "sudden awareness of good possessed by self" theory. The presence of others laughing with us reassures us as to the validity of the value judgment implied in our laughter. It makes us implicitly aware of our possession of good, in this case, valid values and social approval.

Eastman raises another objection against Hobbes' theory, quoting Dorothy Parkman (well-known for her own pungent put-downs of her contemporaries):

> I don't think the superiority theory is true at all. The funny people you like best are the ones you laugh with. There's Benchley, for instance. You live through his troubles with him--they are your own troubles--and that is why you enjoy them so particularly.[1]

When we laugh with someone we may be joining in the enjoyment of his put-down of a third party or set of values, or we may be sympathetically enjoying his self-deprecation. Examples of the latter style of comedy are Benchley, Jack Benny, Joan Rivers, Phyllis Diller, Rodney Dangerfield ("I get no respect"), etc. Benchley, as a picture of fumbling incompetence and self-inflicted disasters, made us feel that our own moments of incompetence are relatively insignificant. "I make my social goofs, but I'm not as bad as that guy" is a comforting feeling. Any minimizing of our defects is, to that extent, a maximizing of our excellence. We laughed with Benchley in that his social clumsiness only made us like, or love, him more.

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[1]Ibid., p. 331.

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Summary of replies to objections

The self-esteem theory proposes that all laughter of pleasure derives from a sudden increase in our awareness of some good possessed by self. However, not every sudden increase in awareness of good possessed will result in a laugh; we must be "in the mood." This awareness is not usually a conscious, explicit thought; rather it is usually automatic, implicit, below the level of conscious thought. Sometimes it is a feeling that is offensive to our conscious ego, and which we attempt to conceal from ourselves with ego defense mechanisms. We have been trained to feel that there is something slightly reprehensible about desiring to feel superior to other people, therefore our conscious ego is reluctant to admit it has indulged in such motivation. Not all humor depends upon a feeling of superiority over other people; some humorous pleasure derives from an awareness of our own good, independent of any comparison with other people. However, those people who over-idealize and glamorize humor are reluctant to admit even this because it is self-oriented and thus seems to denigrate humor. Actually, to admit that humor is self-oriented is not to hold it in contempt; self-improvement, self-fulfillment, self-actualization, self-realization are values that are generally held in high esteem, and certainly they are self-oriented.

Applying to our theory the various objections that writers have raised against Hobbes' theory, and replying to them, we make the following observations. Our delight in

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word play derives from our awareness of our skill in this creative process; or if the word play was done by another, from our awareness of our acuity in appreciating his skill and in "getting the point." Our pleasure in absurdity comes from a temporary sense of freedom from the oppressive aspects of reason and logic. Laughter of sheer joy of living arises from our awareness, suddenly brought to our attention, of our possession of physical and psychological well-being, of acceptance by others, or of some stroke of good fortune.

Some Philosophical Considerations

The validity of the self-respect theory does not stand or fall according to the validity of the following reasoning, although we do consider that this reasoning is strictly rigorous and valid. We feel that we have already in the previous parts of this chapter made a case for the validity of the self-esteem theory from a posteriori considerations, showing that the theory can explain economically the various types of humor. This present a priori reasoning we offer merely as supportive.

The laughter we have been considering in this paper is the type which is an expression of pleasure. Pleasure arises only from satisfaction of desire. Desire is only satisfied when we become aware, consciously or subconsciously, of the possession of the good desired. Therefore it follows rigorously that a genuine expression of pleasure is caused only by an awareness of the possession of good desired. Awareness of the possession of desired good is, by definition,

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self-esteem. Therefore it rigorously follows that laughter of pleasure can only be caused by self-esteem. The element of "suddenness" is observable from experience, and is agreed upon by virtually all the writers on humor.

The above reasoning is subject to a couple of qualifications. First, the statement that awareness of the possession of desired good is, by definition, self-esteem. A dog is vividly aware of his possession of a juicy bone, but we do not consider this awareness to be self-esteem. Customarily, we do not consider any of the animals other than man to be capable of self-esteem. Therefore, when we speak of awareness in the above reasoning, we do not intend the merely physical awareness such as a lower animal has. Rather, we intend the type of awareness that we customarily think only man to be capable of, whether we call it psychic awareness, psychological awareness, or whatever.

Secondly, by experience we know that we can derive pleasure from seeing another possess a good he desires. How then can this be self-esteem, since it seems so "other oriented"? We can only derive such pleasure when we identify with the other in some way, at least as a fellow human being. And to the extent that we identify with him, his triumph is our triumph. This is most obvious in our empathy with the vicissitudes of the hero of a movie, or of our home-town athletic team, or of "my" candidate for public office.

Recasting the reasoning in the second paragraph of

this section in syllogistic form, we have:

Pleasure is caused only by satisfaction of desire.

But a genuine expression of pleasure is caused only by pleasure.

Therefore a genuine expression of pleasure is caused only by satisfaction of desire.

But the laughter of humor is a genuine expression of pleasure.

Therefore the laughter of humor is caused only by satisfaction of desire.

But desire is satisfied only when we become aware, consciously or subconsciously, of the possession of the good desired.

Therefore the laughter of humor is caused only by the awareness, conscious or subconscious, of the possession of the good desired.

But awareness, conscious or subconscious, of possession of good desired is self-esteem.

Therefore the laughter of humor is caused only by self-esteem.

Is this line of reasoning rigorous enough to necessitate acceptance of the conclusion by the person who truly believes in the power of careful reasoning to arrive at truth? To this writer it seems so, but it would be naive to suppose that no objections will be raised, some specious, some perhaps valid. At least two objections can be raised to the statement that awareness of possession of good is self-esteem. First, we point to person X, who is aware of his possession of much good, let us say, a successful career, a loving wife, children, etc., etc., but despite this, person X has a low self-esteem. In response, be it noted that he does have some self-esteem, and such is due to the good he

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does possess. But his self-esteem is not what he would like it to be, because he is not aware of possessing--and probably does not possess--certain goods that he values very highly, let us say, the feeling that he is an innately lovable person, or the sense of a strong purpose in life. Therefore, whereas awareness of good possessed is self-esteem, one's relative level of self-esteem is inversely proportional to the difference between goods desired and good considered to be possessed.

As a second objection we can point to person Y, who realizes that he is ugly, not popular, has little economic future, and not very good health, yet he has a deep self-esteem. How can this be? Getting to know him, we would find that he is possessed of some goods that he values very highly, or at least one pre-eminent good. It may be a few close friends with whom he has a deep and warm relationship, it may be the realization from experience that he is shrewd enough to survive by his wits alone in the big city, it may be his faithfulness to a strong moral code, it may be a deep conviction that God loves him.

In concluding this section, let us repeat that the validity of the self-esteem theory does not stand or fall with the validity of this a priori reasoning. This section is not essential to the rest of the paper, and is offered for what it may be worth. The person for whom reason has a normative influence will feel impelled to accept the conclusion or discover flaws in the reasoning.

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Summary of Chapter VIII

All laughter of pleasure arises from a sudden awareness of some good possessed by self, that is, from a sudden increment of self-esteem.

The self-esteem increase which causes laughter may be of several types. Prominent is the put-down of another person or group, which elevates self by comparison. Similar to this is the put-down of an institution or standard of values, which pleases those hearers who feel some hostility, overt or latent, toward the object of the put-down. The so-called "dirty joke," sexual or scatalogical, fits into this category. Another case of this is nonsense and absurdity humor, which is a put-down of reason and logic or of social convention. Laughter at self becomes possible when we advert to our total excellence which dwarfs into relative insignificance our mishap or predicament at which we are laughing. Laughter occasioned by relief from restraint or threat arises from the resulting sudden awareness of freedom, security and well-being. Similar to this is laughter of joie de vivre, which arises when we suddenly advert to our possession of some major excellence, e.g., physical or psychological well-being, or love from others. Incongruities are funny to the extent that they fall into one or other of the above categories. They offer the additional pleasurable element of providing occasion for the awareness of our acuity in perceiving the incongruity.

There are other factors in humor which give our self-esteem a boost. These are not so much causes that originate

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laughter, as are the foregoing, but rather are factors that reinforce laughter. First, the very fact that we can demonstrate that we have a sense of humor is worth several ego points. A sense of humor is a universally prized excellence, and when we either tell jokes or laugh at them we are reassuring ourselves--and possibly also our hearers--that we are possessed of that excellence.

Secondly, by bantering, persiflage and badinage, modernly called jiving, we demonstrate, to self and others, that we are cool cats. We don't take things seriously, that is for peasants and squares. Due to the abundance of our excellence (coolness and unflappability), we can rise above the things that so bother the mundane and prosaic peasants. We can afford to laugh it off.

A third element is the feeling of camaraderie that comes from laughing together with others at the same thing. Their judgment reinforces our sense of the validity of our own judgment, and the sense of belonging and acceptance we experience is added testimony "you are a good guy." Lovely warm feeling.

We do not always laugh, or even smile, when we receive a sudden increment of self-esteem. Among the inhibiting factors are a depressed or a serious frame of mind.

The sudden awareness of some excellence possessed by self is not always a conscious awareness. More usually it is automatic, implicit, subconscious. Our ego defense mechanisms sometimes make us reluctant to admit to ourselves that a sudden increase in self-esteem is the motivation behind our

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laughter, because most of us feel on the defensive about seeking self-esteem. Our training which glorifies altruism has left us with the feeling that seeking self-esteem is somehow selfish and gross. Or at best it implies that we are lacking in self-esteem and therefore hungry for it. Therefore if someone accuses us of this motivation in some act, we immediately go on the defensive, deny it and say "No, it's just that . . ." and offer some evasion or rationalization, some unselfish reason for our action. Curiously, we are much more ready to admit acting from gross sense pleasure motivation than from self-esteem motivation. The former does not imply the humiliating lack that the latter implies. Somehow we seem to feel that raising our self-esteem is a sort of mental masturbation. As Freud has pointed out, self-deception is one of the major enterprises of the human psyche.

The superiority theory of humor, widely held, is but one aspect of our self-esteem theory. The same is true of the "relief from restraint" theory of humor. Our theory is also more basic and comprehensive than the incongruity theory, explaining that only those incongruities which enhance our self-esteem are amusing. Other theories of humor are found to be variants of the foregoing.

Our theory finds wide support in the remarks of thinkers who have considered the problem of humor. We agree with Freud that it is a pleasure in his own superiority that causes a child to laugh at the mishap of someone else. We agree with Freud that it is a person's sense of his own surpassing

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excellence that enables him to laugh at his own mistakes, foibles or unfortunate predicament. We agree with Freud that our pleasure in nonsense humor arises from our desire to be free from, and superior to, the restrictions that logic and reason impose on our thinking. We agree with Hegel that most laughter--not all--is "little more than an expression of self-satisfied shrewdness . . . ."[1] We agree with Charles Darwin that "something incongruous or unaccountable, exciting surprise and some sense of superiority in the laugher, who must be in a happy frame of mind, seems to be the commonest cause."[2] And we agree with Thomas Hobbes' famous statement that "the passion of laughter is nothing else but a sudden glory arising from sudden conception of some eminency in ourselves, by comparison with the infirmities of others, or with our own formerly," inasmuch as his "eminency by comparison with our own formerly" can be interpreted to mean an increased awareness of our own possession of good.

However, we wish to dissociate our theory from the Hobbesian theory as it is usually understood, as a theory limited to seeking superiority over others, as a "degradation," "contempt," or "derision" theory. These terms are too limited, describing only certain types of humor, and they have a negative connotation, leaving the impression that

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[1]Piddington, Psychology of Laughter, p. 169.

[2]Ibid., p. 179.

humor is necessarily crass, harsh and hostile.

In summation, we believe the self-esteem theory of humor is more basic and comprehensive than other theories; we feel it has explained the pleasure element in various categories of humor and in special cases of humor; finally, we believe that it offers adequate answers to the various objections that have been raised against it. There is of course always the possibility that we have overlooked some flaw.

CHAPTER IX

FREUD REVISITED: SELF-ESTEEM DOMINANT OVER SEX

Introduction

We hope to show in this chapter that several of the key concepts in Sigmund Freud's psychological system are at root matters of self-esteem. The consuming eagerness of the ego to measure up to the ego-ideal, that is, to win the approval of the super-ego, is, we hope to show, a drive for self-esteem. Narcissism, seen by Freud as so important a force in the life of even the normal adult, is primarily a matter of self-exaltation, i.e., of self-esteem in excelsis. Freud's explicit treatment of the topic of self-regard bears out the above points. The relations of the ego with the id are strongly characterized by the ego-defense mechanisms, which we will show are gambits to protect the individual's self-esteem.

Also we will offer evidence from Freud's writings to support the contention that he implicitly acknowledged the self-esteem drive to be stronger than the sex drive.

The question naturally arises, if all this is true, why did Freud not make more of this human motivation for self-regard, instead of merely mentioning it in passing as

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if it were something peripheral. As we know, Freud was throughout his life revising his psychoanalytic theories; his adoption of the concept of an innate destructive instinct, after years of vigorously resisting such a concept, is one example. When a secretary was laboring over the correct translation of a small nuance in his The Ego and the Id, she reports him as remarking "Never mind, it will be obsolete in thirty years anyway." He did not see his theories as something fully finalized, to be engraved in stone forever. We suggest that his openness to further development might have led him, granted a few more years of creative work, to expand upon the drive for self-esteem, a concept that already lay in germine in his writings.

Ego Strives to Please Super-Ego

The relationship between the ego and the super-ego, very important in the Freudian dynamic, seems to amount to a quest for self-esteem. Preliminary to developing this thesis we will consider what Freud intends by the use of the terms id, ego, and super-ego.

The Id

Freud's descriptions of the id contain the notes of an unconscious part of the psyche, a seething cauldron of sexual and hostile impulses, totally non-moral, and without regard for external reality.

> The id, to which we finally come back, has no means of showing the ego either love or hate. It cannot say what it wants; it has achieved no unity of will. Eros and the

> the death-instinct struggle within it; we have seen with what weapons the one group of instincts defends itself against the other. It would be possible to picture the id as under the domination of the mute but powerful death-instincts, which desire to be at peace and (as the pleasure-principle demands) to put Eros, the intruder, to rest; but that would be to run the risk of valuing too cheaply the part played by Eros.[1]
>
> From the point of view of morality, the control and restriction of instinct, it may be said of the id that it is totally non-moral, of the ego that it strives to be moral, and of the super-ego that it can be hyper-moral and then becomes as ruthless as only the id can be.[2]
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> Moreover, the ego has the task of bringing the influence of the external world to bear upon the id and its tendencies, and endeavors to substitute the reality-principle for the pleasure-principle which reigns supreme in the id. In the ego perception plays the part which in the id devolves upon instinct. The ego represents what we call reason and sanity, in contrast to the id which contains the passions.[3]

Despite this not too attractive picture of the id, Freud considers it the most important part of the psyche. In his Outline of Psychoanalysis, published posthumously, he says in a footnote: "This oldest portion of the psychical apparatus remains the most important throughout life; moreover, the investigations of psychoanalysis started with it."[4]

Indeed, Freud presents the satisfaction of the id as man's true purpose in life, with the ego serving as handmaiden in this endeavor:

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[1]Sigmund Freud, A General Selection From the Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. John Rickman, The Ego and the Id (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., Anchor Books, 1957), p. 234.

[2]Ibid., p. 231. [3]Ibid., p. 215.

[4]Freud, Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 16 n.

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> The power of the id expresses the true purpose of the individual organism's life. This consists in the satisfaction of its innate needs. No such purpose as that of keeping itself alive or of protecting itself from dangers by means of anxiety can be attributed to the id. That is the task of the ego, whose business it is also to discover the most favourable and least perilous method of obtaining satisfaction, taking the external world into account. The super-ego may bring fresh needs to the fore, but its main function remains the limitation of satisfactions.[1]

The Ego

The ego can be described as the executive agency in the human psyche. It is primarily conscious, although parts of it are unconscious. As we have seen in previous quotes describing the id, the ego's function--one of them--is to insure the fullest possible satisfaction of the id's desires consistent with reality, reason, and the strictures of the super-ego.

The ego fears offending the super-ego (conscience):

> On the other hand, we can tell what lies hidden behind the ego's dread of the super-ego, its fear of conscience. The higher being which later became the ego-ideal once threatened the ego with castration, and this dread of castration is probably the kernel round which the subsequent fear of conscience has gathered; it is this dread that persists as the fear of conscience.[2]

In the above paragraph we see Freud's identification of super-ego, ego-ideal, and conscience. Sometimes he distinguishes between them to the extent that the ego-ideal is seen as the normative part of the super-ego, and the conscience is the critical agency of the super-ego.

The ego is eager to win the approval of the super-ego,

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[1]Ibid., p. 19.

[2]Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 233.

that is, to measure up to the ego-ideal:

> The fear of death in melancholia only admits of one explanation: that the ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego, instead of loved. To the ego, therefore, living means the same as being loved--being loved by the super-ego . . . .[1]

The ego is presented as serving three masters, the id, external reality, and the super-ego. The ego is desirous of satisfying the desires of the id, but without flouting reality and thus bringing disaster upon itself, and further, it seeks to win the love of the super-ego:

> . . . we see this same ego as a poor creature owing service to three masters and consequently menaced by three several dangers: from the external world, from the libido of the id, and from the severity of the super-ego.[2]

The Super-Ego

As noted previously, Freud uses the terms super-ego and ego-ideal interchangeably:

> The considerations that led us to assume the existence of a differentiating grade within the ego, which may be called the ego-ideal or super-ego, have been set forth elsewhere. . . .[3]

The super-ego is the "part" of the psyche which is formed through identification with authority figures (parents, society, church, etc.) and "introjection" (internalization) of the values expounded by these authority figures. Thus it is the individual's internalized moral code.

> For that which prompted the person to form an ego-ideal, over which his conscience keeps guard, was the influence of parental criticism (conveyed to him by the medium of the voice), reinforced, as time went on, by those who trained and taught the child and by all the

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid., p. 232. [3]Ibid., p. 217.

> other persons of his environment--an indefinite host, too numerous to mention (fellow men, public opinion).[1]

The super-ego is not merely the individual's internalized code of values (ego-ideal), but also it carries out a function of observing the ego and criticizing it for failing to live up to the code of values. This is the "conscience" function of the super-ego, arousing a sense of guilt in the ego:

> An explanation of the normal conscious sense of guilt (conscience) presents no difficulties; it is due to tension between the ego and the ego-ideal and is the expression of a condemnation of the ego pronounced by its criticizing function.[2]

> . . . how is it that the super-ego manifests itself essentially as a sense of guilt (or rather, as criticism--for the sense of guilt is the perception in the ego which corresponds to the criticism) . . . .[3]

The super-ego, as Freud uses it, is not merely the individual's code of values, but more especially, his code of moral values. Freud seems to envision it as embodying a set of traditional moral values, and does not deal with cases where the individual's code of values may be such as "do the other guy before he does you," "grab all the gusto you can get," "money is a man's best friend," all the sexual prowess and physical prowess connotations of the macho code, and a variety of other values commonly entertained which cannot be classified as "traditional morality."

The super-ego applies the strictest moral standard to

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[1]Freud, On Narcissism, p. 118.

[2]Freud, The Ego and the Id, p. 229.

[3]Ibid., p. 231.

> the helpless ego which is at its mercy; in general it represents the claims of morality, and we realize all at once that our moral sense of guilt is the expression of the tension between the ego and the super-ego.[1]

Finally, Freud sums up the functions he has ascribed to the super-ego:

> But let us return to the super-ego. We have alloted it the functions of self-observation, of conscience, and of [maintaining] the ideal.[2]

Ego Strives to Please Super-Ego

Freud portrays the ego as eager for approval by the super-ego. The following passage conveys the impression that this desire for approval by the super-ego is the ego's most basic desire:

> The fear of death in melancholia only admits of one explanation: that the ego gives itself up because it feels itself hated and persecuted by the super-ego, instead of loved. To the ego, therefore, living means the same as being loved--being loved by the super-ego . . .[3]

For the ego to be loved by the super-ego means, in Freud's terms, that the ego is measuring up to its ego-ideal, (or at least that the individual feels this is the case), that is, that the individual feels he is living up to his code of values. Or, in other words, he feels that he possesses those excellences which he considers to be ideal. An awareness of possession of excellence is our definition of self-esteem. Therefore, "to the ego, living means being loved by the

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[1]Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey, vol. XXII: New Introductory Lectures (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 61.

[2]Ibid., p. 66. [3]Freud, Ego and the Id, p. 233.

super-ego" translates as "for the self, living means having self-esteem." Or, equivalently, the individual's most important desire is for self-esteem.

But measuring up to the ego-ideal is only one of the many ways in which we acquire self-esteem. As we noted previously, in Freud's description of the super-ego he is talking primarily, if not exclusively, of a traditional moral code. The awareness of living up to such a moral code is but a part of our total sense of self-respect. Other sources of self-respect are, of course, the acceptance, regard and love that others show us, our feeling of competence in this or that area, our financial status, etc. Thus, correspondence of the ego with ego-ideal (ego being loved by the super-ego) is self-esteem, but only a part of our total self-esteem picture.

Freud himself sometimes uses the term self-esteem for this gratification which the ego feels when it measures up to the ego-ideal:

> On the other hand, if the ego has successfully resisted a temptation to do something which would be objectionable to the super-ego, it feels raised in its self-esteem and strengthened in its pride, as though it had made some precious acquisition.[1]

This sense of heightened self-esteem he also describes as a "feeling of triumph":

> There is always a feeling of triumph when something in the ego coincides with the ego ideal. And the sense of guilt (as well as the sense of inferiority) can also be understood as an expression of tension between the ego

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[1]Freud, Outline of Psychoanalysis, p. 77.

and the ego-ideal.[1]

The above passage also indicates that a discrepancy between ego and ego-ideal means a lack of self-esteem in the form of feelings of guilt and inferiority.

Freud recognizes that this measuring up of the ego to the ego-ideal, this approval of the ego by the super-ego, is not the total source of self-esteem:

> Part of the self-regard is primary--the residue of childish narcissism; another part arises out of such omnipotence as experience corroborates (the fulfillment of the ego-ideal), while a third part proceeds from gratification of object-libido.[2]

The two other sources of self-esteem mentioned in the above paragraph we will consider in the section of this chapter concerned with Freud's use of the term "self-regard."

In summary, Freud recognizes the vital importance to the ego of approval by the super-ego. "To the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego." Further, he says that pleasing the super-ego causes the ego to feel "raised in its self-esteem and strengthened in its pride." Also, he states that the individual's self-regard comes in part from fulfillment of the ego-ideal, an expression synonymous with pleasing the super-ego. Thus we see the message in Freud, explicit and implicit, that the ego's eagerness to please the super-ego (fulfill the ego-ideal) is a quest for self-esteem.

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[1]Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, p. 200.

[2]Freud, On Narcissism, p. 121.

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Narcissism

In this section we hope to develop the theme that Freud by the term narcissism customarily meant a self-love which is both a desire for possession of excellences and a self-congratulation on excellences already possessed. That is, narcissism, as Freud most frequently uses it, means both the desire for self-esteem and self-esteem itself.

Of course he also uses narcissism at times in the sense of sexual love directed toward oneself:

> We say that the human being has originally two sexual objects: himself and the woman who tends him, and thereby we postulate a primary narcissism in everyone, which may in the long run manifest itself as dominating his object-choice.[1]

However, in most of his references to narcissism the self-esteem motif predominates. For instance:

> In literature, indeed, even the great criminal and the humorist compel our interest by the narcissistic self-importance with which they manage to keep at arm's length everything which would diminish the importance of their ego. It is as if we envied them their power of retaining a blissful state of mind--an unassailable libido-position which we ourselves have since abandoned.[2]

Here, the terms "self-importance" and "importance of their ego" correspond to self-esteem more closely than to self-directed sexual desire.

In the following passage we see much more than a mere sexual connotation to the word narcissism:

> To this ideal ego is now directed the self-love which the real ego enjoyed in childhood. The narcissism seems to be now displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, deems itself the possessor of all

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[1]Ibid., p. 112.

[2]Ibid., p. 113.

> perfections. As always where the libido is concerned, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood; and if, as he develops, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and his own critical judgment is awakened, he seeks to recover the early perfection, thus wrested from him, in the form of an ego ideal. That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood--the time when he was his own ideal.[1]

The term ideal ego in the passage above signifies the sort of person the individual would like to be, and feels he should be. The "self-love which the real ego enjoyed in childhood" is, as the next sentence reveals, "the infantile ego deeming itself the possessor of all perfections." Or, as Freud equivalently states it elsewhere, the "oceanic sense of omnipotence" that the infant feels. Thus, the self-love of narcissism is here identified as an ego deeming itself possessor of perfections, which is a good definition of self-esteem.

The narcissism of childhood, i.e., the ego deeming itself possessor of all perfections, is, as the person matures, "displaced on to this new ideal ego." That is, the person has now an image of the sort of person he wishes to be, and is attempting to develop in that direction. He is "not willing to forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood," and he "seeks to recover the early perfection." How? By measuring up to his ideal ego. This striving to measure up to his own ideal is a striving to regain the original sense of being "possessor of all perfection," i.e., a striving to

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

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maximize self-esteem.

Freud explicitly recognizes that this striving to measure up to the ideal ego is a matter of self-esteem. In describing why two men, both tempted to immoral conduct, react in different ways, one gladly indulging in the immoral conduct and the other rejecting it with "utmost indignation," Freud says that the latter has an ideal ego which is inconsistent with the immoral conduct, which ideal leads him to repress such conduct or even thoughts thereof. Such "repression, as we have said, proceeds from the ego; we might say with greater precision: from the self-respect of the ego"[1] (emphsis ours).

In the conclusion of the lengthy paragraph quoted above, Freud uses the expression "when he was his own ideal." By this he means, as the context shows, the condition when the infant was not striving for perfection but already "deemed itself the possessor of all perfection." Thus, "when he was his own ideal" signifies the state of having self-esteem in excelsis. In a later passage Freud recognizes that this state is man's happiness, the goal he strives to attain.

> The ego-ideal has imposed several conditions upon gratification of libido through objects, for, by means of its censorship, it rejects some of them as incompatible with itself. Where no such ideal has been formed, the sexual trend in question makes its appearance unchanged in the personality in the form of a perversion. As in childhood, to be his own ideal once more, also where sexual tendencies are concerned, is the happiness

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

that man strives to attain.[1]

In the above paragraph Freud is saying that the individual will reject (presumably, he means "will as a rule reject") such sexual conduct as is incompatible with his ideal self-image. If the person has not internalized such a prohibiting self-image, then "the sexual trend in question makes its appearance unchanged in the personality in the form of a perversion." "To be his own ideal once more, also where sexual tendencies are concerned, is the happiness that man strives to attain." Not a happiness, but the happiness. To regain that original state of self-esteem in excelsis, that "sense of oceanic omnipotence," is man's goal in life. "Also where sexual tendencies are concerned," i.e., even the powerful sexual tendencies must conform to the ideal self-image. Even sex must take a back seat to this drive for self-esteem.

Other references in Freud indicate that he customarily uses the term "narcissism" not to connote sexual love for oneself but rather to connote a sense of one's possession of excellence, i.e., pride, self-esteem, self-regard, self-respect, etc. For instance, in praising the ability to laugh at oneself he says:

> Obviously, what is fine about it [humor] is the triumph of narcissism, the ego's victorious assertion of its own invulnerability. It refuses to be hurt by the arrows of reality or to be compelled to suffer. It insists that it is impervious to wounds dealt by the outside world, in fact, that these are merely occasions for affording it pleasure.[2]

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[1] Ibid., p. 121.

[2] Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud, ed. James Strachey, vol. 5: Humour (London: Hogarth Press, 1950), p. 217.

Again using narcissism and self-love in the sense of self-esteem Freud says:

> After this introduction I propose to describe how the universal narcissism of men, their self-love, has up to the present suffered three severe blows from the researches of science.[1]

The first of these, the discovery that the earth is not the center of the universe but rather revolves around the sun, is a blow to man's "inclination to regard himself as lord of the world." "The second, the biological blow to human narcissism," came from Darwin's discovery that man "is not a being different from animals or superior to them." Freud's own discoveries constitute the third blow to man's narcissism, self-love, self-esteem:

> But these two discoveries--that the life of our sexual instincts cannot be wholly tamed, and that mental processes are in themselves unconscious and only reach the ego and come under its control through incomplete and untrustworthy perceptions--these two discoveries amount to a statement that the ego is not master in its own house. Together they represent the third blow to man's self-love, what I may call the psychological one. No wonder, then, that the ego does not look favourably upon psychoanalysis and obstinately refuses to believe in it.[2]

We might add that the present study offers the basis for a fourth blow to man's narcissism, for few things are more offensive to man's self-esteem than the suggestion that even in his most prized actions he is seeking self-esteem. Sly

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[1]Freud, Standard Edition, vol. XVII: A Difficulty in the Path of Psychoanalysis, p. 139.

[2]Ibid., p. 143.

Voltaire compared the drive for self-esteem with the penis--highly prized but must be kept hidden. In the case of the drive for self-esteem, hidden even from ourselves.

Other writers have recognized the close ties,even the quasi-identification, of the concepts of narcissism, self-love, ego strength, and self-esteem. Symonds says:

> Narcissism or self-love also helps to strengthen the ego. It has already been pointed out that ego strength is coordinate with self-respect, self-esteem, and self-confidence. One of these feeds into the other, and as the child is helped to become successful and is praised for his efforts his ego gathers strength.[1]
>
> It should be noted in passing that any process which damages the ego and renders it less effective at the same time hurts the self and valuation placed in the self. As the ego becomes less effective, narcissism is also hurt and the individual feels less adequate and there is loss of self-esteem.[2]

Otto Fenichel, author of The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis, remarks:

> The individual's experiences connected with omnipotence lead to a most significant need of the human mind. The longing for the oceanic feeling of primary narcissism can be called the "narcissistic need." "Self-esteem" is the awareness of how close the individual is to the original omnipotence.
>
> The primitive methods of the regulation of self-esteem arise from the fact that the first longing for objects has the character of a longing for the removal of disturbing displeasure, and that the satisfaction by the object removes the object itself and revives the narcissistic state. The longing for the return of omnipotence and the longing for the removal of instinctual tension are not yet differentiated from each other. If one succeeds in getting rid of an unpleasant stimulus, one's self-esteem is again restored. The first supply of satisfaction from the external world, the supply of

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[1]Percival M. Symonds, The Ego and the Self (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1951), p. 125.

[2]Ibid., p. 155.

> nourishment, is simultaneously the first regulator of self-esteem.[1]

In summation of this section, as Freud frequently uses the term narcissism he refers to a self-love which "deems itself the possessor of all perfections," i.e., self-esteem to the nth degree. Also, he says that man seeks to recover this high degree of self-esteem, experienced in infancy, by striving to live up to his ego-ideal.

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[1] Otto Fenichel, The Psychoanalytic Theory of Neurosis (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 40.

Freud's Explicit References to Self-Esteem

Freud's most explicit consideration of the self-esteem motivation is contained in his work On Narcissism: An Introduction. As the context shows, he follows common usage in equating the terms self-regard and self-esteem. He introduces the subject:

> At this point we may enter upon a discussion of the self-regarding attitude in normal persons and in neurotics. First of all, the feeling of self-regard appears to us a measure of the ego; what various components go to make up that measure is irrelevant. Everything we possess or achieve, every remnant of the primitive feeling of omnipotence that experience has corroborated, helps to exalt the self-regard.[1]

The meaning of his comment that self-regard is a measure of the ego is not immediately evident. It might mean that self-regard is the raison d'etre of the ego, the thing that the ego desires most of all. This interpretation would seem to be born out by his remark in The Ego and the Id that for the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego, i.e., having self-approval, self-regard. The editor of Abstracts of his works offers another interpretation when she states: "Self-regard appears to be an expression of the size of the ego."[2] In this interpretation high self-regard is a large enriched ego, while low self-regard is a weak impoverished ego. This interpretation harmonizes well with the raison d'etre interpretation, inasmuch

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[1] Freud, On Narcissism, p. 119.

[2] Carrie Lee Rothgeb, ed., Abstracts of the Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud (Rockville, Md.: U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, n.d.), p. 92.

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as the ego desires most of all its own enlargement and enrichment.

In the above passage Freud notes that our self-esteem is exalted by our possessions, by our achievements, and by our "primitive feeling of omnipotence." By "primitive feeling of omnipotence" Freud refers to the feeling aroused in the infant by having all his needs immediately satisfied by the mother. Equivalently, he says that the infantile ego "deems itself the possessor of all perfections."[1] Inasmuch as self-regard is exalted by possessions, etc., it seems plausible to infer that this is why the ego wants possessions, achievements, and a feeling of omnipotence, i.e., to exalt the self-regard.

Freud enlarges on the various sources of self-esteem:

> Part of the self-regard is primary--the residue of childish narcissism; another part arises out of such omnipotence as experience corroborates (the fulfillment of the ego-ideal), while a third part proceeds from gratification of object-libido.[2]

"Childish narcissism" would seem to refer to an earlier comment noting the "self-love which the real ego enjoyed in childhood," and the fact that "the infantile ego deems itself the possessor of all perfections."[3] This "deems itself the possessor of all perfections" equates with our definition of self-esteem as "awareness of excellence possessed by self." Thus, by childish narcissism Freud means the child's self-

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[1]Freud, On Narcissism, p. 116.

[2]Ibid., p. 12.

[3]Ibid., p. 116.

esteem. Of course, in his concept of narcissism Freud sometimes includes the note of a sexual love for one's own body, but such an aspect of narcissism seems to have minimal significance in the self-esteem of the normal adult,of which Freud is here speaking. Of broader significance for the normal adult would be the residue of his infantile "deeming himself the possessor of all perfections."

The second aspect of self-esteem that Freud mentions is "such omnipotence as experience corroborates." The original infantile feeling of "oceanic omnipotence" is corroborated in the adult ego to the extent that the ego succeeds in measuring up to the ego-ideal (succeeds in winning the approval of the super-ego). This fulfillment of the ego-ideal we have previously seen to be one aspect of self-esteem.

The third aspect of self-esteem "proceeds from gratification of object-libido." By "object-libido" Freud means the external object of sexual desire. And by gratification of this he means success in attaining that object, not merely in a crude physical possession, but in the sense of being loved in return. He says:

> Love in itself, in the form of longing and deprivation, lowers the self-regard; whereas to be loved, to have love returned, and to possess the beloved object, exalts it again.[1]

Although Freud here is using the term love primarily in its sexual meaning (he uses the term "erotic cathexis" in this context), he distinguishes between self-regard exaltation

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[1]Ibid., p. 121.

from physical possession of the beloved object and exaltation from the psychological gratification of having love returned.

What does he mean by the statement that love in the form of longing lowers self-esteem? Here he is referring to unrequited love ("deprivation"), and probably everyone is aware of the depressing effect that this can have on the ego. As Freud says, "where the erotic life is concerned not being loved lowers the self-regarding feelings, while being loved raises them."[1]

In this connection Freud makes some statements that are highly revealing and which we wish to quote at length, then analyze. Parts of the following passage we have already cited and commented upon, but their importance justified re-considering them from a slightly different angle.

> Perhaps the importance of the subject, and the difficulty in surveying it, may be my excuse for adding a few remarks that are rather loosely strung together.
>
> The development of the ego consists in a departure from the primary narcissism and results in a vigorous attempt to recover it. This departure is brought about by means of the displacement of libido to an ego-ideal imposed from without, while gratification is derived from the attainment of this ideal.
>
> At the same time the ego has put forth its libidinal object-cathexes. It becomes impoverished in consequence both of these cathexes and of the formation of the ego-ideal, and it enriches itself again both by gratification of its object-love and by fulfilling its ideal.
>
> Part of the self-regard is primary--the residue of childish narcissism; another part arises out of such omnipotence as experience corroborates (the fulfillment of the ego-ideal), while a third part proceeds from gratification of object-libido.
>
> The ego-ideal has imposed several conditions upon the gratification of libido through objects, for, by means

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[1]Ibid., p. 120.

> of its censorship, it rejects some of them as incompatible with itself. Where no such ideal has been formed, the sexual trend in question makes its appearance unchanged in the personality in the form of a perversion. As in childhood, to be his own ideal once more, also where sexual tendencies are concerned, is the happiness that man strives to attain.[1]

Freud stresses the importance of these remarks, and we concur. They reveal the most basic drive in the human psyche, as we shall see. "The development of the ego consists in a departure from the primary narcissism and results in a vigorous attempt to recover it." By "primary narcissism" Freud sometimes means a sexual love for one's own body, but here he seems to be referring to primary narcissism in the sense of the infant's ego "deeming itself the possessor of all perfections." Indicating that he does not mean sexual love for one's own body is the remark that the ego's development is a "vigorous attempt to regain it." The development of the human ego is not an attempt to return to sexual infatuation with oneself, but is indeed an attempt to return to the state attributed by Freud to infants, a state of feeling oneself the possessor of all perfections. Freud makes the same point in a previous paragraph already cited, but which will be repeated here for convenience:

> To this ideal ego is now directed the self-love which the real ego enjoyed in childhood. The narcissism seems to be now displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, deems itself the possessor of all perfections. As always where the libido is concenred, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to

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[1]Ibid., p. 121.

> forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood; and if, as he develops, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and his own critical judgment is awakened, he seeks to recover the early perfection, thus wrested from him, in the form of an ego-ideal. That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood--the time when he was his own ideal.[1]

The message of the above passage is simply this: the small child has an exalted self-esteem; he is robbed of this by the criticism of others and by his own awakening critical faculties; he strives to regain this exalted self-esteem by measuring up to his ego-ideal.

Thus, the development of the ego, cited in the previously quoted paragraph, is a reluctant relinquishing of the sense of being the possessor of all perfections, followed by a vigorous attempt to regain that happy state. Thus we have Freud's implicit meaning that the development of the ego is a drive for self-esteem.

Supporting this interpretation is his next sentence. The departure from early narcissism is actually brought about by awakening of critical faculties, as noted by Freud in the paragraph cited immediately above, but it is accompanied by a vision of what one <u>wants</u> to be, i.e., the ego-ideal inculcated by parents, society, etc. It is as if the child were saying to himself, "Well, I guess I'm not perfect after all,but here is the way I can go to get perfection." Each time he lives up to that ego-ideal his self-esteem rises. "Gratification

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[1]Ibid., p. 116.

is derived from the attainment of this ideal."

At the same time the maturing person has become infatuated with someone (his "ego has put forth its libidinal cathexes"). This causes a loss in self-esteem:

> Further, it is easy to observe that libidinal object cathexis does not raise the self-regard. The effect of the dependence upon the loved object is to lower that feeling: the lover is humble. He who loves has, so to speak, forfeited a part of his narcissism, which can only be replaced by his being loved.[1]

Also, the formation of the ego-ideal causes a lose in self-esteem (impoverishes the ego) because the person is now vividly aware of the contrast between his actual condition and his desired condition (the ego ideal). But this lost self-esteem is regained (the ego enriches itself) by being loved in return, and by each success in measuring up to the ego-ideal.

That Freud is talking of self-esteem in all of this is emphasized in his next paragraph which notes that <u>self-regard</u> consists in a combination of the residue of the childhood narcissism, of measuring up to the ego-ideal, and of being loved in return.

The final paragraph notes the dominance of the self-esteem drive over the sex drive. The sex drive is, in itself, lacking in discrimination as to its object (the infant is a "polymorphous pervert") and wishes to express itself in many inopportune ways and times, but the ego-ideal (super-ego) forbids this. "It rejects some of them as incompatible with itself." Thus, when the sex drive says "do this," and the

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[1]Ibid., p. 120.

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self-esteem drive says no, the latter customarily wins out, according to this paragraph. Where no ego-ideal has been formed on this point, i.e., where the sexual indulgence in question does not constitute an affront to the individual's self-esteem, then "the sexual trend in question makes its appearance unchanged in the personality in the form of a perversion."[1]

The final sentence, as we have pointed out previously, emphasizes that the human drive for happiness is summed up by the urge to measure up to one's ego-ideal, i.e., to maximize self-esteem. "Also where sexual tendencies are concerned"--even the powerful sex drive must conform itself to this ego-ideal.

Summarizing the points Freud has made in that one passage of five paragraphs, dealing with what he states is an "important subject," we have: the course of development of the human ego is an attempt to regain the supreme self-esteem enjoyed in infancy; this is also the happiness that men seek; when this search for self-esteem comes into conflict with the sex drive, the latter must yield; the individual's self-esteem is made up of the residue of that supreme self-esteem

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[1]Freud presumably uses the term "perversion" here as meaning a perversion of traditional sexual morality, thus including in perversion such activities as fornication and adultery. This does not mean that Freud considered such activities to be reprehensible. He stated, "I have the utmost contempt for traditional sexual morality." Or possibly he used the word perversion merely to state the case in its strongest possible terms.

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of infancy, plus the self-esteem acquired from measuring up to the ego-ideal and from being loved. Further distilling: the drive for self-esteem is the dominant human motivation; it is the happiness that we seek and it is the course the ego takes in its development.

We are not maintaining that Freud would explicitly agree to these statements; rather, this is the message implicitly contained in his statements.

Ego Defense Mechanisms

In this section we intend to develop the thesis that the ego defense mechanisms, so important in psychoanalytic literature, are attempts by the psyche to protect itself from admitting into consciousness knowledge that would lower its self-esteem.

By "ego defense mechanisms" Freud means strategems the ego uses to avoid "unpleasure" and threats of unpleasure.

> . . . the ego makes use of various methods of fulfilling its task, i.e., to put it in general terms, of avoiding danger, anxiety and unpleasure. We call these devices defense mechanisms.[1]

Danger is an imminent unpleasure, and anxiety is a vague apprehension of possible unpleasure, as well as being in itself a form of unpleasure, so it seems fair to say that in the defense mechanism the ego is seeking to avoid unpleasure.

And that unpleasure which it is seeking to avoid is some perception of reality:

> The psychical apparatus is intolerant of unpleasure and strives to ward it off at all costs and, if the perception of reality involves unpleasure, that perception--i.e., the truth--must be sacrificed.[2]

The perception of reality the ego is seeking to avoid is a knowledge (about its own urges, desires, thoughts) which is incompatible with the ego-ideal, i.e., which would cause a lowering of self-esteem:

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Collected Papers, ed., James Strachey, Analysis, Terminable and Interminable (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959), p. 338.

[2]Ibid., p. 339.

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> The patient's ego had been approached by an idea which proved to be incompatible, which provoked on the part of the ego a repelling force of which the purpose was defense against this incompatible idea. . . . I recognized a universal characteristic of such ideas: they were all of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach and of psychical pain, and the feeling of being harmed; they were all of a kind that one would prefer not to have experienced, that one would rather forget. From all this there arose, as it were automatically, the thought of defence.[1]

As Freud points out in the above paragraph, the ideas the ego defends against are "all of a distressing nature, calculated to arouse the affects of shame, of self-reproach, and psychic pain." Shame and self-reproach are expressions of lowered self-esteem, and psychic pain is the generic term for those feelings and others of the same nature.

Explicit recognition by Freud that at least one of the ego-defense mechanisms, repression, is defending against loss of self-esteem is contained in the following passage:

> Repression, as we have said, proceeds from the ego; we might say with greater precision: from the self-respect of the ego. The very impressions, experiences, impulses, and desires that one man indulges or at least consciously elaborates in his mind will be rejected with the utmost indignation by another, or stifled at once even before they enter consciousness. . . . The one man has set up an ideal in himself by which he measures his actual ego, while the other is without this formation of an ideal. From the point of view of the ego this formation of an ideal would be the condition of repression (emphasis ours).[2]

As we see in the above paragraph, one man has formed

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[1]Sigmund Freud, The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, ed., James Strachey, vol. II: Psychotherapy of Hysteria (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 269.

[2]Freud, On Narcissism, p. 233.

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an ego-ideal which causes him to repress certain "impressions, experiences, impulses and desires" because they are inconsistent with his ego-ideal. In other words, admitting them to consciousness would cause tension between ego and ego-ideal, which tension we have already seen in a previous section means a loss of self-esteem. More precisely, this tension between ego and ego-ideal is by definition a lack of self-esteem to the degree that the tension exists. Tension between ego and ego-ideal means the individual is aware that he does not possess excellences that he should have. Awareness of lack of proper excellences is lack of self-esteem, at least in the area in question.

In other writers we find recognition of the fact that ego defense mechanisms are strategems for the protection of self-esteem. Ernest Hilgard, in his presidential address to the American Psychological Association in 1949, said:

> Another way of looking at the mechanisms is to see them as bolstering self-esteem through self-deception. . . . If self-deception either by denial or by disguise is accepted as characteristic of a mechanism, the problem still remains as to the source of or reasons for the self-deception. The obvious interpretation is that the need for self-deception arises because of a more fundamental need to maintain or to restore self-esteem. Anything belittling to the self is to be avoided.[1]

Gardner Murphy recognizes that the defense mechanisms operate to exclude information that would injure the individual's self-image:

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[1]Ernest R. Hilgard, "Human Motives and the Concept of the Self," The American Psychologist 4 (September 1949), p. 376.

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> The device for selecting and filtering, structuring and unifying the system of defenses hardly ever operates in the rather mechanical fashion that was suggested up to the point at which the self entered the picture. The exclusion of information is in very large part guaranteed by another central device--the building up of a picture of the self, to be forever enhanced and defended.[1]

Nathaniel Branden, in his book The Disowned Self, sees ego defense mechanisms as attempts to disown a part of self that is humiliating to the self-esteem:

> When a person represses certain of his thoughts and memories, because he regards them as immoral or humiliating, he disowns a part of himself--in the name of protecting his self-esteem.
>
> When a person represses certain of his desires, because he cannot tolerate the anxiety of wondering whether or not he will attain them, an anxiety that makes him feel helpless and ineffectual, he disowns a part of himself--in the name of protecting his self-esteem.
>
> When a person represses certain of his emotions, because they threaten his sense of control or conflict with his notion of "strength" or "maturity" or "sophistication," he disowns a part of himself--in the name of protecting his self-esteem.[2]

In The Ego and the Self Percival Symonds points out that the purpose of the ego defense mechanisms is both to protect and to enhance self-esteem:

> Much has been said about "defense mechanisms." The so-called defense mechanisms are really self-defense mechanisms and oftentimes their purpose is as much self-enhancement as it is a defense against those forces which might destroy self-esteem. Most of the mechanisms result in a kind of self-deception which seems to be necessary in order to maintain, enhance, and restore the self. Repression is necessary for most persons so

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[1]Gardner Murphy, Outgrowing Self-Deception (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1975), p. 44.

[2]Nathaniel Branden, The Disowned Self (Los Angeles: Nash Publishing Co., 1971), p. 88.

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> that they can keep their dignity and self-esteem. Rationalization, denial, and projection all help the individual to avoid facing unpleasant facts about himself.
>
> The individual is constantly on the alert to protect himself from threat or to raise his own self-esteem, and to the extent that he can perceive threats or opportunities for self-enhancement, he will act on them.[1]

In summary, Freud has both explicitly and implicitly recognized that the ego-defense mechanisms are attempts to protect self-esteem. First, explicitly, in that he notes that the mechanism of repression proceeds from the self-respect of the ego. Then implicitly, in that he sees the defense mechanisms as defending against ideas and impulses which are incompatible with the ego-ideal. Add to this his statement that the individual's self-regard derives in part from a fulfillment of the ego-ideal, meaning that a failure to fulfill the ego-ideal causes a fall in self-regard, and we are left with the conclusion that the ego defense mechanisms are attempting to protect the ego from a fall in self-regard.

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[1]Percival M. Symonds, The Ego and the Self (New York: Appleton-Century-Croft, Inc., 1951), p. 109.

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Is Self-Esteem Dominant Over Sex in Freud's Theory?

It seems hardly likely that Freud would agree that the self-esteem drive is stronger than the sex drive. To the end he stoutly maintained the supremacy of the id, the home of the sex instincts, in man's psychic life. As Hall and Lindzey put it:

> Although Freud regarded the ego as the excutive of the total personality, at least in the case of the healthy person, he never granted it an autonomous position; it always remained subservient to the wishes of the id. In what was to be his final pronouncement on psychoanalytic theory, Freud (1940) reiterated what he had said so many times before, "This oldest portion (the id) of the mental apparatus remains the most important throughout life." The id and its instincts express "the true purpose of the individual organism's life." There is no question as to how Freud felt regarding the relationship of the ego and the id: the id is the dominant member of the partnership.[1]

It takes considerable chutzpah to suggest the heinous heresy that a case can be made, from Freud's own words, for exactly the opposite position, namely, that the self-esteem drive is indeed dominant over the sex instincts. Yet, timidly and tentatively, that is precisely the suggestion we will try to substantiate in this section. The case we will present does not argue to a triumph of self-esteem over sex instincts in every situation, but to a general dominance of the former when engaged in a confrontation with sex instincts.

First, let us consider Freud's statement that the ego is prepared to refuse the demands of the sex instincts (and aggressive instincts) when the ego sees these demands as

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[1] Hall and Lindzey, Theories, p. 62.

endangering its own interests:

> When the Id makes an instinctual demand of an erotic or aggressive nature on a human being, the most simple and natural response for the Ego, which governs the apparatus for thinking and muscle innervation, is to satisfy this by an action. This satisfaction of the instinct is felt as pleasure by the Ego, just as not satisfying this instinct would undoubtedly become a source of discomfort. Now, it may happen that the Ego eschews satisfaction of the instinct because of external obstacles--namely, when it realizes that the action in question would bring in its course serious danger to the Ego.[1]

Here we see the ego quite ready to accede to the demands of the id, until its own interests are threatened. Then it shows its dominance and "eschews satisfaction" of the id instincts. Here Freud is speaking of external obstacles to id satisfaction, for instance, a man renounces an opportunity to have an appealing sexual affair because of danger of discovery and resulting humiliation and loss of public esteem. Thus self-esteem (as we have seen, self-esteem derives in large part from public esteem) has dictated a refusal to the gratification of the sex instinct.

On some occasions refusal to gratify the sex instinct may be made for what Freud calls internal reasons, that is, by the ego's desire to live up to the ego-ideal, i.e., please the super-ego:

> While, however, instinctual renunciation for external reasons is only painful, renunciation for internal reasons, in obedience to the demands of the Super-ego, has another economic effect. It brings besides the inevitable pain a gain in pleasure to the Ego--as it

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[1] Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), p. 148.

> were, a substitutive satisfaction. The Ego feels uplifted; it is proud of the renunciation as of a valuable achievement. . . . When the Ego has made the sacrifice to the Super-ego of renouncing an instinctual satisfaction, it expects to be rewarded by being loved all the more. The consciousness of deserving this love is felt as pride.[1]

Here the ego finds pleasure in its dominance over erotic and aggressive urges, pleasure which Freud describes as pride, i.e., self-esteem. Thus, whether renunciation was made for external or internal reasons, the ego has had a confrontation with the id and has proved dominant. Of course, the ego never completely conquers its ever-present opponent/ally, and there are occasions when the id wins the day. Then the organism wakes up hating itself.

Another passage indicates the dominance of self-esteem over sex:

> The ego-ideal has imposed several conditions upon the gratification of libido through objects, for, by means of its censorhsip, it rejects some of them as incompatible with itself. Where no such ideal has been formed, the sexual trend in question makes its appearance in the form of a perversion. As in childhood, to be his own ideal once more, also where sexual tendencies are concerned, is the happiness that man strives to attain.[2]

Here we see the ego-ideal in the driver's seat, imposing conditions on the subservient sex instinct and forbidding its expression in certain circumstances. How does the ego-ideal impose conditions on the sex drive? The ego is eager to measure up to the ego-ideal, for by this it obtains its self-regard, as Freud points out in passages we have cited previously.

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[1] Ibid., p. 149.

[2] Freud, On Narcissism, p. 121.

To measure up to his ego-ideal, even when sexual tendencies pull in the opposite direction, is the self-esteem, the happiness that man strives to attain.

The dominance of self-regard over the sex instincts in the human motivational economy is again implicitly conceded by Freud in his description of the normal development of the girl child:

> Analyses of the remote phallic period have now taught me that in girls, soon after the first signs of penis-envy, an intense current of feeling against masturbation makes its appearance, which cannot be attributed exclusively to the educational influence of those in charge of the child. . . . I cannot explain the opposition which is raised in this way by little girls to phallic masturbation except by supposing that there is some concurrent factor which turns her violently against that pleasurable activity. Such a factor lies close at hand in the narcissistic sense of humiliation which is bound up with penis-envy, the girl's reflection that after all this is a point on which she cannot compete with boys and that it would therefore be best for her to give up the idea of doing so.[1]

Freud poses this development not as an occasional thing, but as the regular, normal mode. Little girls show an "intense current of feeling" against sex pleasure in the form of masturbation and "violently" reject it. What has so intensely and violently dominated her id urges? Self-esteem, as Freud points out. Masturbation humiliates her, reminding her of her organ inferiority to the little boy. The point here is not whether Freud is right in his analysis of the little girl's psychology; the point is that he has implicitly conceded once again that self-regard has dominated the sex instinct.

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Sexuality and the Psychology of Love (New York: Collier Books, 1963), p. 190.

In Freud's analysis of hatred we find additional evidence in the same vein:

> The ego hates, abhors, and pursues with intent to destroy all objects which are for it a source of painful feelings, without taking into account whether they mean to it frustration of sexual satisfaction or of gratification of the needs of self-preservation. Indeed, it may be asserted that the true prototypes of the hate-relation are derived not from sexual life, but from the struggle of the ego for self-preservation and self-maintenance.[1]

The thought in this passage is admittedly complex and its meaning is not appreciably clarified by the context. However, one thought is evident: the ego, when wounded, sweeps aside sexual considerations in its intent to destroy that which has wounded it. The ego's struggle for self-preservation and self-maintenance exerts an imperious supremacy which will brook no interference from sexual desires. And let us recall what Freud means by the self-preservation of the ego: "for the ego, living means being loved by the super-ego." That is, living means self-approval.

In summation, Freud has pointed out that the ego customarily refuses to allow satisfactions to the id when the ego's own interests would be threatened by so doing. He also states that desire to live up to the ego-ideal will lead the ego to refuse the demands of the id. He cites the usual development of the little girl in which the ego instinct to avoid humiliation leads her to give up the sex pleasure of masturbation. Finally, he points out in the analysis of hate,

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[1]Sigmund Freud, Instincts and Their Vicissitudes, p. 84.

that to avoid pain itself, the ego will forego sexual satisfaction. All these facts support the contention that the ego instincts are the senior partner in their uneasy alliance with the sex instincts.

Summary of Chapter IX

We have seen that certain concepts of key significance in the Freudian system are at root an expression of the drive for self-esteem. The relation between the ego and the super-ego, in which the ego strives to please the super-ego, or in other words, to fulfill the ego-ideal, is a quest for self-regard, self-respect, to use Freud's words. He frequently uses narcissism in the sense of the psyche's original state of deeming itself possessor of all perfection (having self-esteem to the nth degree) and states that the course of development of the ego is an attempt to regain that original state of high self-esteem. This is the "happiness that men seek." The important ego-defense mechanisms are strategems to protect the ego from unwelcome knowledge about itself, knowledge which would lower self-esteem.

Finally, we have seen evidence in Freud's writings that when the self-esteem drive and the sex drive come into conflict, customarily the self-esteem drive is victorious. The organism "indignantly rejects" sexual urges which conflict with the ego-ideal.

Certainly Freud did not explicitly maintain the dominance of self-esteem motivations over the sex drive. Such

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a conclusion would be quite alien to his explicit doctrine. However, as we have developed in this chapter, from clues in his writings a case can be made for just such dominance. We do not consider our conclusion as definitive, but hope that it will spark further study in this direction.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

The central theme of this study is the affirmation that human behavior is motivated by one or a combination of two desires, sense pleasure and self-esteem. The latter, greatly predominant in influencing behavior, is variously known as self-respect, pride, amour-propre, self-regard, a sense of human dignity, a sense of human worth, self-confidence, self-acceptance, self-complacency, self-feeling, desire for a good self-image, desire for ego strength, desire for self-realization, desire for self-actualization, self-approval (Mark Twain), glory (Hobbes), enhancing the phenomenal self (Snygg/Combs), striving for superiority (Adler), legitimation of role identity (McCall/Simmons), measuring up to the ego-ideal (Freud).

All of these terms are comprehended under one concept, "awareness of good possessed by self."[1]

The negative aspect of this same drive is our desire to avoid any awareness of lack of excellence possessed by

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[1]Some of the above terms do not have explicit reference to a desire for awareness of possession of excellence by self but merely indicate a desire for possession of excellence by self. However, such terms carry an implicit connotation of awareness inasmuch as they cannot be satisfied until the individual is in some way aware of his ego strength, self-realization, self-actualization, superiority, etc.; and also, they do achieve a measure of satisfaction even by an illusory awareness of excellence possessed.

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self. We abhor any sense of our own worthlessness, uselessness, incompetence, failure, emptiness, lack of control, lack of lovability, loss of face, etc.

We seek a sense of our own worth in many ways, but predominant are two: winning esteem from others (acceptance, friendship, respect, love, etc.), and by dominance over others (power, superiority, etc.).

In this constant striving to maintain and enhance our self-regard we automatically and subconsciously engage in a variety of ingenious psychological strategems, some of which Freud identified by the term "ego defense mechanisms," and others which might be called "ego enhancement mechanisms." These self-deceptions enable us to maintain illusions of our outstanding excellence and help us to avoid confrontations with our defects.

Among observers of the human scene who have pointed out the all-pervasive nature of this human desire for self-esteem are Alfred Adler ("all our functions follow its direction"), William McDougall ("self-regard is the master sentiment"), Nathaniel Branden ("single most significant key to human behavior"), Robert Schuller ("ultimate will of man"), Mark Twain ("compels a man's every act"), psychologists Arthur Combs and Donald Snygg ("most crucial, if not the only task of existence"), psychologists George McCall and J. L. Simmons ("man's main concern"), not to mention the legion of writers who have commented on the omnipresence of pride in human motivation.

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But there is a second and independent thread of motivation in human behavior. We seek physical pleasure and strive to avoid physical pain. Thus our psyche is a chariot pulled by two steeds, self-esteem and sense pleasure. The latter of these is more ostentatious in its work, but the former is much stronger and more active. Sometimes these steeds work in harmony (a sexual conquest may heighten one's sense of his competence as a lover), and at times they work at cross purposes (the sexual conquest may inflict a galling wound on one's self-image of being a moral, faithful person).

Self-esteem and sense pleasure are the two ways we can become aware of good possessed by self. Every organism is engaged in constant effort to possess those goods which are suitable for its well-being. It must have some means of becoming aware that it has achieved possession of such a good. We can picture the questing organism, as if it were saying, "I want something, just what I don't know. No, this is not it. No, this other is not it. Ah, this is it!" What has told the questing organism that it has found the suitable good? With animals, the answer seems to be sense gratification. By smell, sight, hearing, taste, rest, comfort and other tactile gratifications the animal becomes aware "this is it!", i.e., that it is on the verge of possessing and is possessing a good suitable to its well-being.

Intelligent beings have another way of knowing that they possess a good seemingly suitable to their well-being. The intelligent being is able to conceive of a desirable

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good and reflect upon itself as the possessor of desirable goods. This intellectual conception of self as possessor of good is what is known as self-esteem, self-regard, pride, self-respect, etc.

Thus, the two motives, desire for sense pleasure and desire for self-esteem, are both comprehended under the expression "desire for awareness of good possessed by self." The awareness in the first case is sensate, and in the second case it is psychological (intellectual, if you prefer).

As a spin-off from our central thesis several other propositions emerged. We will summarize them here, without again going into the reasoning that led to them. And of course in a summary it is not possible to go into all the nuances of a proposition. Wherever we have been able to discover testimony from thinkers who have arrived at the same conclusion, we will mention them.

An obvious and all-pervasive human motivation is our desire for esteem from others, in the form of acceptance, friendship, respect, love, etc. These evidences of esteem we value because they are evidences of excellences existing in ourselves, that is, they raise our self-esteem. Among the writers who have commented on this relationship are William James, sociologist G.H. Mead, and Freud himself. Although our desire for esteem from others is obvious, it is not always obvious to ourselves that we desire it for the sake of self-esteem. Honest introspection may be necessary to reveal this.

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The spectrum of human desires, as summed up in Maslow's hierarchy of needs--desire for physiological gratification, for safety, for belonging and love, for esteem from others, and for self-actualization--are reducible to desires for sense pleasure and self-esteem.

Pleasure is satisfied desire. Inasmuch as all human desires are comprehended under sense gratification and self-esteem, so also all human pleasures are comprehended under two types, sensual pleasure and "psychological" pleasure. The latter is an awareness of excellence possessed by self, i.e., self-esteem. We discover that Thomas Hobbes has anticipated us in this conclusion. Thomas Aquinas also divides pleasure into sensual and rational (awareness of good possessed by self).

Happiness is, by definition, satisfied desire. It is pleasure, in the broadest sense of that term. It is awareness of good possessed by self. It is the sum total of the individual's self-esteem and sense pleasure, with the former playing by far the larger role.

Behavior which is usually attributed to an instinct for self-preservation can be explained by man's desire for self-esteem and sense pleasure. These motivate him to wish to continue his bodily existence, inasmuch as it is the essential base for sense pleasure and for most of his self-esteem. What seems to be the action of an "instinct for self-preservation" is actually the result of a desire for continued gratification of other instincts (Anna Freud), or for

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preservation of the "phenomenal self" (self-esteem), (Snygg/Combs).

When continued existence is seen by the individual as intolerably painful (due to low self-esteem), with no hope for improvement, and cessation of existence is seen as cessation of pain, conditions for suicide exist. We have seen that several writers on suicide concur that a hopelessly low self-esteem is the critical factor in suicide.

Although self-esteem is the critical factor in an individual's sense of well-being, we are not proposing it as a reliable criterion for personal excellence. It is too easy for self-esteem to be based upon actual possession of illusory excellence (e.g., money), or upon illusory possession of actual excellence.

Self-love motivates all that we do. Such diverse thinkers as Plato, Aristotle, Skinner, Adler and Freud concur in this propostion. Self-love is not to be equated with selfishness unless it expresses itself in disregard for the welfare of others. Self-love can motivate us to be solicitous for the welfare of others. The underlying motivation for such solicitude may be desires for material gain, for social approval, for a self-image as generous and outgoing, or, more nobly, for highest self-actualization or for the welfare of an extended self (principle of identification). World religions and ideologies offer the latter two motivations to their adherents to encourage altruistic behavior.

Due to bonds of perceived similarity we sometimes

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identify with another person. To the extent that we identify with the other we regard him as an extended self, and desire that his well-being flourish. This we have referred to as the "principle of identification." The classic example is the mother's attitude toward her children.

Apparent exceptions to the drive to maintain and enhance our self-esteem are individuals who have a low self-regard and resist attempts by others to raise the individual's self-esteem. Actually, such persons desire higher self-esteem but experience has made them wary of increased self-esteem followed by crushing humiliation. They find an accustomed low level of self-esteem more tolerable than a sharp loss in self-esteem. They are in the situation of a man who is eager to increase his financial capital but is afraid to risk investing it in a scheme that might lose.

We have seen that self-deprecation is used, consciously or subconsciously, as a ploy to maintain or heighten self-esteem. Self-hatred is actually hatred of some aspect of ourselves that causes us severe self-esteem losses. Thus, self-hatred springs, curiously enough, from self-love.

Our desire for increased self-esteem is insatiable and would run wild, causing each of us to conceive of himself as omnipotent, a god, the greatest, were it not for painful confrontations with reality. We learn by painful experience that exaltation of self in defiance of reality is counter-productive, bringing in its wake a loss of self-esteem due to loss of esteem from others, or even due to resulting physical

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disaster. This curbing effect of reality upon our self-esteem we have referred to as the "reality principle." Hubris invites nemesis.

A person is truly humble to the extent that he seeks self-esteem in accord with the reality principle.

Different personality types emerge according to the adjustment an individual makes between his sense pleasure desires and his self-esteem desires. The individual who derives self-esteem from being able to indulge his sense pleasure desires is what is commonly known as an Epicurean type. The individual who derives self-esteem from curbing sense pleasure is often referred to as a Puritan or Stoic type.

Anger is a surge of determination to recoup a self-esteem loss by "getting even" with the persons seen as responsible for the loss. We have seen that Aristotle and Aquinas have anticipated this analysis of anger.

Aggression, in the sense of man's inhumanity to man, whether in crime, war, or daily unkindnesses, is due frequently to anger, and thus to a desire for an increase in self-esteem. Other sources of aggression are desire for gain, and desire for security. These are reducible to self-esteem and/or sense pleasure considerations. Psychologist Gregory Rochlin has developed the thesis that all aggression is due to self-esteem considerations.

Man does not have an innate instinct for aggression. However, his desires for self-esteem and sense pleasure can

lead him to remove obstacles in the way of satisfaction of those desires, even if this means injury to others. Thus, aggressive behavior does not need to be learned, although much of it is learned.

Genuine laughter is an expression of pleasure, pleasure due to a sudden increase in self-esteem. Thomas Hobbes and several others have arrived at this same conclusion as to the cause of laughter.

Implicit in the writings of Sigmund Freud is the recognition that self-esteem is the strongest human motivation, considerably more pervasive than is the sex drive. There are indications that Freud may have been moving in the direction of explicit recognition of this fact.

In summary, our principle conclusion, that the desire for self-esteem is the key motivation (sense pleasure playing an independent but minor role) to understanding human behavior, has been arrived at by several writers. Our derivative conclusions, concerning the cause of anger, aggression, suicide, and humor, have the support of still other writers. The convergence of all this testimony from thinkers ancient and modern lends strong support to our hypothesis.

It is not our purpose to attempt to spell out any "practical" applications of the thesis we have developed in this study. The reader will have realized that its practical applications are legion, and that another volume this size would not be adequate to touch upon all of them. The more basic the principles in any science, the more are the practical

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problems which those principles will help solve, although, correspondingly, the less evident will be the immediate application of the principle. The principles of human behavior we have presented in this study are most basic. However, any "practical application" considerations are of secondary importance. The justifying values of the thesis developed in these pages are a knowledge of truth and a knowledge of self.

The human mind by its very nature wants to know why, to understand the reasons behind the facts of experience, to be able to order and comprehend the bewildering complexity of phenomena in as few basic principles as possible. This is the scientific enterprise, it is the enterprise that distinguishes man from the brutes. Truth is the good most suitable to the human mind, truth being an understanding of reality, an understanding which is complete to the degree that the mind comprehends the basic principles governing that reality. The physical world about us is of great significance, and thus we realize the importance of knowledge of the laws governing the physical world. But of even greater significance is the inner world of human desires and the behavior thereby generated. Thus, knowledge of the laws governing human motivation is of greater worth than knowledge of the laws governing the behavior of stars, animals and plants. Knowledge of truth, grasp of reality, is a thing of primary value in itself, and needs no further justification for its value.

Wise men down through the centuries have exhorted the

follower in search of happiness that he must "know thyself." "The proper study of mankind is man." If modern psychologists agree on any point, it is that self-insight is conducive to mental health. An essential feature of self-insight is understanding why we behave as we do, and this study offers the foundation for that knowledge.

The thesis developed in these pages is immediately recognizable as pertaining to psychology, but actually it is not only germane but fundamental to any discipline involving human behavior. Most especially is this self-esteem theory fundamental to theology. Theology is the study not merely of God, but also of man and his relation to God. An accurate and comprehensive theology is impossible without an accurate and comprehensive grasp of man's nature, above all in its most significant aspect, the motivations that give rise to human behavior.

The theory proposed in this study provides the foundation for a specific theology of self-esteem, dealing with a host of issues (some of which were briefly touched upon in these pages)--under what circumstances is seeking self-esteem moral, when immoral; how do the motivations of self-esteem and sense pleasure accord with what we know of the life of Christ; what does a comparison of Thomistic, Lutheran and Calvinistic positions on self-esteem reveal; how can the drive for self-esteem be squared with traditional religious strictures against pride and self-seeking, etc.

Our theory of human motivation lays the foundation

for a further investigation of the agreement or lack of agreement between our theory and theological doctrines about the nature of man, morality, and the way to salvation.

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[1]The most feasible division for this section seemed to be according to chapter, which in most cases is also according to subject matter. A division according to subject matter alone would have left the numerous references in Chapters II and III in limbo. Even though a work has been cited in a previous chapter it is repeated when cited in succeeding chapters.

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